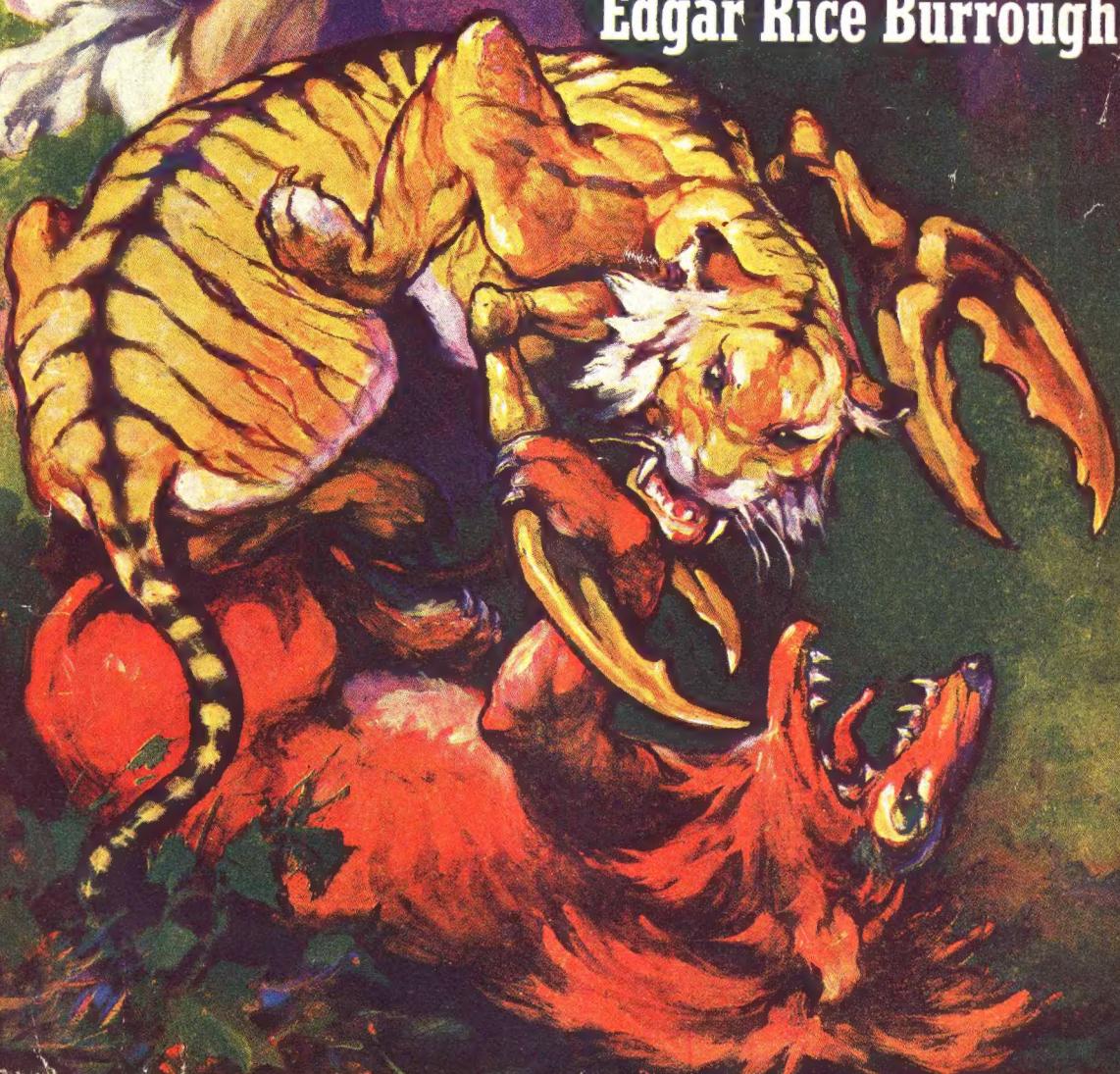


EIGHT WHO CAME BACK By NAT SCHACHNER

fantastic ADVENTURES

NOVEMBER 20c

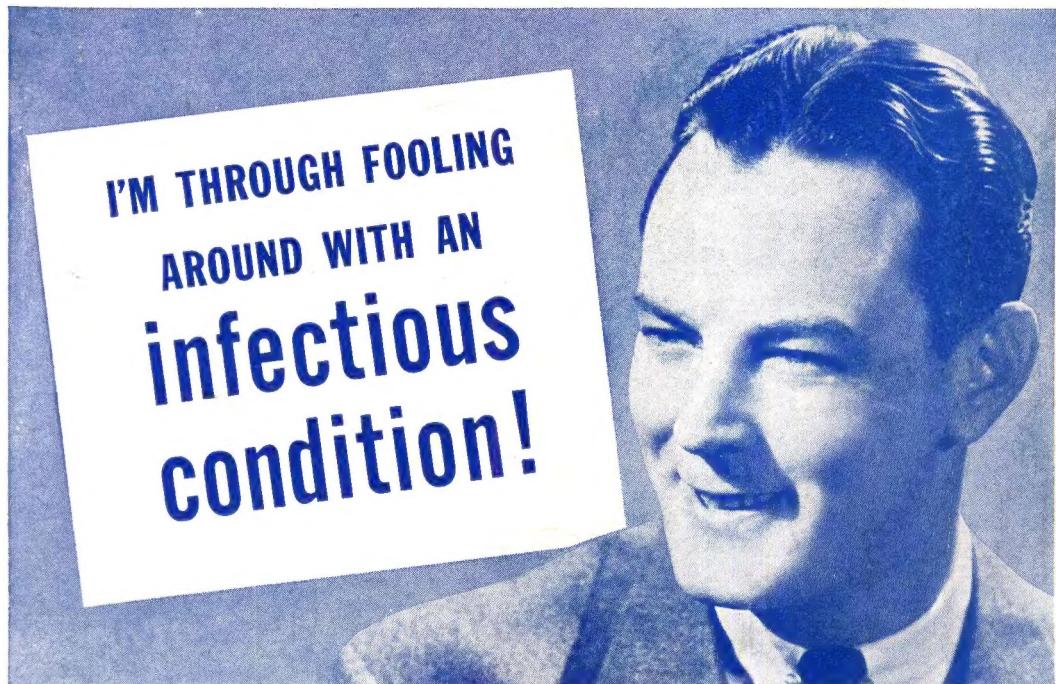
The
LIVING DEAD
By
Edgar Rice Burroughs



VOLUME 3
NUMBER 9

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

NOVEMBER
1941



1 WHAT TO TRY NEXT? That dandruff was so unbelievably stubborn! I was sure upset—suppose this was the infectious kind! When my wife suggested Listerine, I said, "First, I'll ask Doctor Joe!"

2 BOY! WAS I GLAD TO HEAR from the good old Doc that Listerine Antiseptic kills millions of germs associated with infectious dandruff! Hopeatlast! I'd *try* Listerine and massage. It helped other dandruff victims—would it help me? I could hardly wait to get started!

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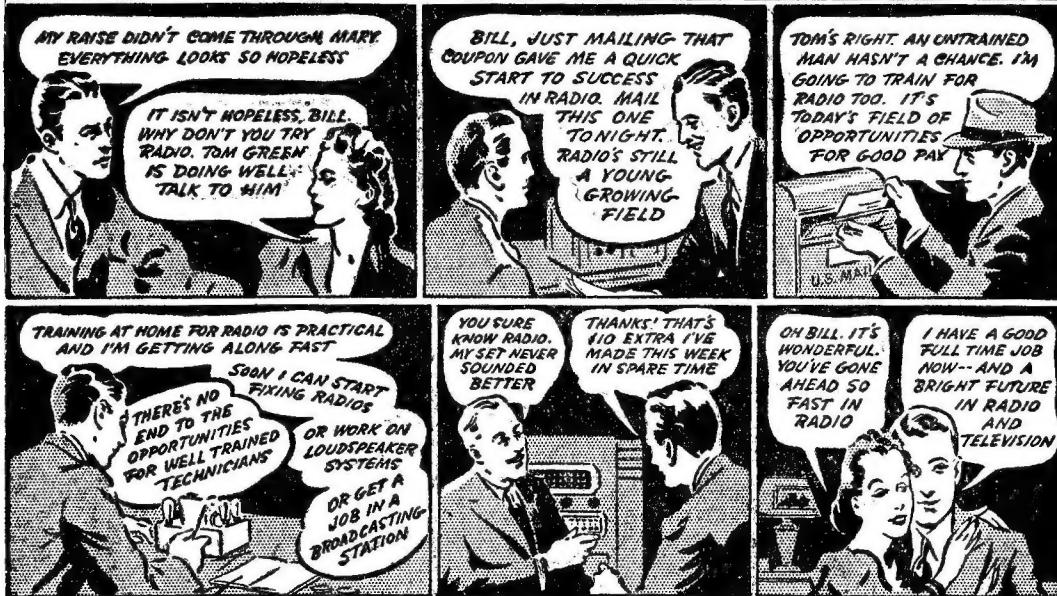
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Before I completed my lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator. HOLLIS F. HAYES, 327 Madison St., Lapeer, Michigan.

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I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N. R. I. I am now Radio Service Manager for the M— Furniture Co. for their four stores. JAMES E. RYAN, 119 Pebble Court, Fall River, Mass.



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I am in the U. S. Army, Signal Corps, as Chief Radio Clerk. My duties also include maintenance of the transmitter and receiver when the Chief Radio Operator is absent. R. W. ANDERSON, Radio Station WTI, Vancouver Barracks, Washington.



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ADVENTURES

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VOL. 3
NO. 9

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Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John illustrating a scene from "The Living Dead"
Illustrations by J. Allen St. John; Robert Fuqua; Ned Hadley; Jay Jackson; Julian S. Krupa; Rod Ruth
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FANTASTIC
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NOVEMBER,
1941

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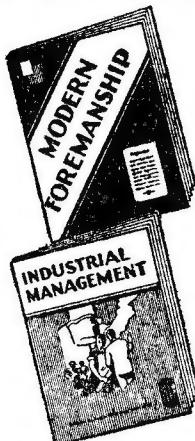


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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

UE to the unexpected flood of answers to our contest to tell the Martian which is his right hand, we have decided to present the prize winners in our December issue, rather than in this. There are two reasons: 1—There are a *lot* of letters to read, and your editor is a slow judge; and he wants to give each entry deep and fair consideration, and 2—Nobody seemed to know we had a deadline, and on August 1, we extended the closing date to the 10th. So, no announcement this month. Watch our next issue for the winners.

THE ad on the opposite page is our answer to you readers who have been clamoring for us to put out a FANTASTIC ADVENTURES quarterly, just as we did with *Amazing Stories*. Well, there it is. Go out and get it!

OUR recent call for cartoons and cartoon ideas has resulted in a flood of—nothing! In fact, we got plenty of cartoons, but none of them were fantastic. So, we repeat, we need cartoons, you cartoonists, and ideas, you readers, *but for Pete's sake, not the kind Esquire uses!* It's just as sensible as submitting a western story to us; we can't use it.

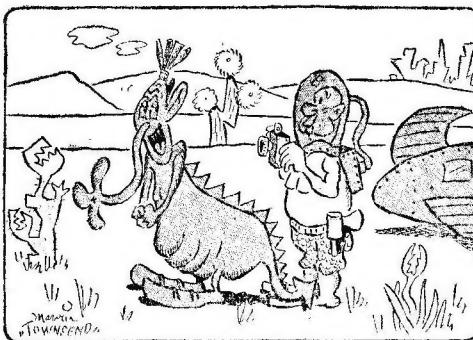
WITH our last issue we seem to have definitely established artist McCauley as a rival to the crown held by Petty and Varga. The girls on *Fantastic Adventures'* have come into their own. And consequently, many more are to come. And now she's graduating to *Amazing Stories* also. You Mac Girl fans had better watch that magazine too! We're warning you.

COMING next month is a story you're going to like a lot. It's a complete novel by David V. Reed, and it is illustrated on the cover by Rod Ruth, who captured your approval with his painting of Curce. We won't say anything beyond the fact that we think Reed has topped all his previous efforts by a mile. And if you remember his stuff in *Amazing Stories*, you'll admit that's going a mile in the saying itself!

EANDO BINDER writes us and tells us another "Little People" story is under construction. Which is good news. These characters have captured the imagination of our readers as no others have, excepting perhaps the lovable little Oscar. We'll be waiting, Binder!

INCIDENTLY James Norman, author of the Oscar stories, has grown quite famous these days. He has sold a book, and also a novel to a leading adventure magazine for a price that makes us very much delighted—because Norman is another of our "discoveries" who has proved

he was worth what we saw in him when he first came to us. You remember "The Blue Tropics," of course, don't you? Keep up the good work, Norman. We'd like to see you on the best-seller list some day.



"Aw g'wan, I take the 'worst' pictures!"

SOME time ago we forecasted an Oscar story, and a cover by Krupa for that story. Well, we've broken our promise, and we want to pass the buck for it to

artist Krupa. When, oh when, Julian, are we going to get that cover? Alas all forecasting!

NELSON S. BOND, one of our ten best writers, hints that he is working on a 60,000 word novel for us, based on—oops, we can't tell that! Everytime we let you know in advance somebody is working on a novel about the south pole, one of our competitors immediately runs a novel about the south pole. But anyway, Nelson is working on a novel—about the south pole.

WHAT do you think of our new artist, Ned Hadley? He's coming back next month with something that will really tickle you. And more news—Finlay is coming soon. With some of his best work in years, done especially for us.

ROBERT FUQUA'S illustration for "Eight Who Came Back" is the result of much research, and each of the characters is accurately presented as to features and clothing. Roses to Robert.

(Concluded on page 73)

WINTER

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MOONS
of
DEATH

By
DAVID V.
REED

LAND of the
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AT ALL NEWSSTANDS
OCTOBER 1ST

THE LIVING DEAD

By
**EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS**

**Paralyzed from the neck down, Carson
and Duare become living exhibits in a
horrible museum on the planet Venus**

I STILL don't believe it," said Jonda, looking down at the landscape of Venus speeding past beneath the anotar in which we flew.

"But it is true," I laughed.

And lucky, too. Duare and Doran had rescued us just in the nick of time from the arena in Brokal. Jonda and I had been facing more than adventure when we faced several thousand warriors armed with swords and gaffs--we had been facing certain death. And so, it was with great thanksgiving that I breathed the pure, cold air of the altitude at which the anotar now flew.

"Where do we go now?" asked Jonda.

I glanced at Duare, then at Doran.

"To Japal," I said. "That is Doran's city, and you can return to Tonglap from there. It is the safest thing for us to do."

Under ordinary circumstances I should have been glad to take Jonda to Tonglap, his homeland; but I was not going to risk Duare's safety any

further. Japal was in the general direction we would have to travel to get to Korva, and Tonglap was not.

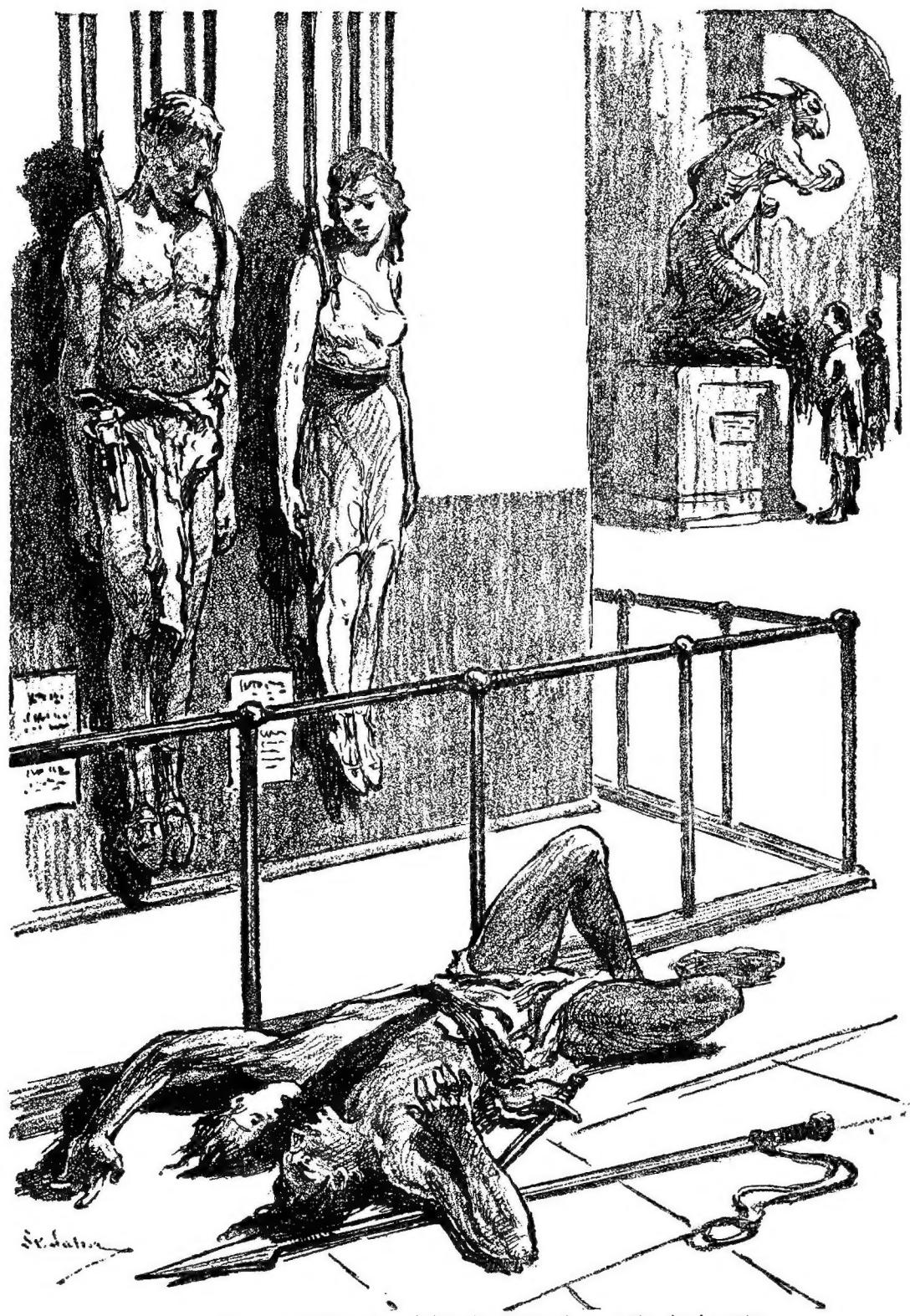
"Yes," I decided, "we go to Japal."

WE were given a royal welcome in Japal, the anotar was stocked with food and water; and as quickly as we decently could, we bade our friends goodby and took off.

Duare and I had discussed our course and had come to the conclusion that if we flew in a southwesterly direction we would come pretty close to hitting the land mass known as Anlap, or Bird-land, on which Korva is situated. This course took us down the length of the Lake of Japal for about five hundred miles and then out over a *noellat gerloo*, or mighty water, which is Amtorian for ocean.

"Isn't it restful!" sighed Duare.

"After what we've been through, almost anything would be restful," I replied. "This is almost too restful and too good to be true."



Carson and Duars hung helplessly, staring down at the dead warrior

"I thought that I should never see you again, Carson. They told me some of the horrible customs of the Brokols—their drinking of human blood and all that. I was nearly frantic before I was able to take off in the anotar to search for you. Won't it be wonderful to get back to Korva, where we are loved?"

"And, for the first time since we met, have peace and security. My dear, if it's humanly possible, I think I shall never leave Korva again."

"Won't Taman and Jahara be amazed and delighted to see us again! Oh, Carson, I can hardly wait to get back."

"It's a long flight," I told her, "and after we reach Korva, we may have a long search before we can locate Sannara—it's a very little city in a very big country."

The ocean across which we were flying proved to be enormous, and it was a very lonely ocean. We saw a few ships at the lower end of the Lake of Japal and a few more close to the coast on the ocean; but after these, we saw nothing—just a vast expanse of gray sea, a sea that was never blue, for it had no blue sky to reflect; only the gray clouds that envelop Venus.

Amtorian shipping seldom sails out of sight of land, for all maps are wildly inaccurate; because of their belief that Amtor is a saucer shaped world floating on a sea of molten rock with what is really the nearer Pole as the periphery, or outer edge, of the saucer and the Equator at the center. You can readily see how this would distort everything. Then, too, the mariners have no celestial bodies to guide them. If they get out of sight of land, they are sunk, figuratively, and very likely to be sunk literally.

Duare and I were much better off, as I had built a compass in Havatoo;

and I had roughly corrected the Amtorian maps from my knowledge of the true shape of the planet. Of course, my maps were pitifully inadequate; but they at least had some claim to verity.

We were getting pretty tired of that ocean, when Duare sighted land. I had been confident that Japal lay in the northern hemisphere; and from the distance we had traveled since leaving it, I was certain that we had crossed the Equator and were in the southern hemisphere, where Korva lies. Perhaps this was Korva that we were approaching! The thought filled us both with elation.

IT was really a lovely land, although a barren rock would have looked lovely to us after the monotony of that long ocean crossing, during which we had seen nothing but water for a full week. As we neared the land, I dropped down for a closer view. A great river wound down a broad valley to empty into the sea almost directly beneath us. The valley was carpeted with the pale violet grass of Amtor, starred with blue and purple flowers. Little patches of forest dotted the valley. We could see their glossy, lacquer-like boles of red and azure and white, and their weird foliage of heliotrope, lavender, and violet moving to a gentle breeze.

There is something strangely beautiful about an Amtorian landscape, beautiful and unreal. Perhaps it is the soft, pastel shades, that make it look more like a work of art than a creation of Nature. Like a gorgeous sunset on Earth, it is something that could never be reproduced by man. I sometimes think that man's inability to reproduce the beauties of Nature has led to the abominable atrocities called modern art.

"Oh, how I'd like to get down there

among those flowers!" exclaimed Duare.

"And get captured or killed by some of the weird creatures that roam your fantastic planet," I retorted. "No, young lady! As long as our food, our water, and our fuel hold out, we stay right up in the air, where we're safe, until we find the city of Sanara."

"So my planet is fantastic, is it?" demanded Duare, coming to the defense of her world like the Travel Bureau of Honolulu or the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. "I suppose your planet is perfect, with its crooked politicians, its constantly warring religious sects, its gangsters, and its funny clothes."

I laughed and kissed her. "I should never have told you so much," I said.

"From what you have told me, I gather that the best thing about your planet isn't there any more," she said.

"What's that?" I asked.

"You." So I kissed her again.

"Look!" I exclaimed presently; "there's a city!"

Sure enough, several miles up the river and close to it, there lay a city.

"It can't be Sanara, can it?" asked Duare, hopefully.

I shook my head. "No; it is not Sanara. The river near Sanara runs due east; this one runs due south. Furthermore, this city doesn't resemble Sanara in any respect."

"Let's have a closer look at it," suggested Duare.

I couldn't see any harm in that; so I headed for the city. It reminded me a little of Havatoo, except that it was entirely circular, while Havatoo is a half circle. There was a large central plaza, with avenues radiating from it like the spokes of a wheel; other avenues formed concentric circles spaced equidistant from one another between the plaza and the high outer wall.

"It looks like two Havatoos stuck together," observed Duare.

"I wish it were Havatoo," I said.

"Why?" demanded Duare. "We just escaped from that city with our lives. I don't ever care to see it again. The very idea! I, the daughter of a thousand jongs, was not good enough to live in Havatoo; so they were going to destroy me!"

"That was a bit stupid," I admitted.

I dropped down close over the city. Everything about it was round—the central plaza was round, the buildings were all round, the whole city was round; and many of the buildings were capped with spheres.

Now people were running into the streets and the great central plaza and out upon their roofs, looking up at us. Many of them waved to us, and we replied.

"What an interesting city," said Duare. "I'd like to visit it. The people look very friendly, too."

"My dear," I replied, "you are becoming a veritable glutton for disaster."

"I wouldn't go down there for the world," said Duare. "I just said I'd like to visit it."

Just then my propeller flew off.

CHAPTER II

We Land in Anlop

THE propeller was the one that Kandar had made and fitted to the engine while I was a prisoner in Brokol. Evidently, he hadn't fitted it properly.

"I think you are going to get your wish, Duare," I said. "We haven't enough elevation to clear the city; so I guess I'll have to bring her down in that plaza."

As I spiralled to a landing, the people fled from the plaza giving me plenty of room; but the moment the anotar

came to a stop, they swarmed out again forming a circle about us. They danced around the anotar, singing and laughing. Others, behind them, had gathered handfuls of flowers with which they showered us. The songs they sang were songs of welcome. Such a reception of strangers in an Amtorian city was without parallel in my experience; it was remarkable; it was amazing. And it certainly reassured us.

Presently three of them approached us; and the dancing and singing stopped, as the others gathered around to listen. All were smiling. Somehow they reminded me of the acrobats I used to see on the old vaudeville circuits, with their set smiles—mugging, I think it was called.

One of the three bowed, and said, "Welcome to Voo-ad, if you come in peace." Voo-ad means First City.

"We landed because of an accident to our anotar," I replied; "but we come in peace, and we are appreciative of your friendly reception."

"My name is Ata-voo-med-ro," he said. I say "he" because I couldn't tell whether the speaker was a man or a woman. Like all the others, he looked like both or neither; and as Ata-voo-med-ro means A-One-million-three it gave me no clew to the speaker's sex.

"My mate is Duare of Vepaja," I replied, "and I am Carson of Venus."

"You are both very welcome here," he said, "and I hope that you will descend from that strange creature which flies through the air like a bird and come with me to pay your respects to Vik-vik-vik, our jong."

Just then I saw one of the people pick up my propeller and run off with it. I called Ata-voo-med-ro's attention to this, and asked him to have the prop brought back to me. It had fallen into a bed of flowers; so I hoped it had not been greatly injured.

"You shall have it when you need it," he assured me.

DUARE and I climbed down from the anotar, and accompanied Ata-voo-med-ro and his two companions across the plaza toward one of the larger buildings which face it. A large crowd followed us to the door of this building, which proved to be the jong's palace.

There were neither old people nor children in the crowd, and they all looked more or less alike—plump and rather soft looking. Although they wore weapons—a sword and a dagger—they did not look like a race of fighters. Each of them wore a single, skirt-like garment, which I later discovered is not a garment at all; just a number of long pouches or pockets strapped about their waists and falling almost to their knees, but they are so close together that they resemble a pleated skirt. Running down the exact center of their face and body, both front and back, is a well defined reddish line that looks like a birth-mark.

As you know, the two halves of our faces and bodies are not identical. In these people the lack of identicalness is more marked, though not to the extent of being a deformity. Perhaps the fine red line bisecting their faces adds to the apparent difference between the two halves.

We were ushered into the presence of Vik-vik-vik, which in English means 999. He smiled at us most benignly, and said, "The Vooyorgans welcome you to Voo-ad," or, the First People welcome you to the First City.

He asked us many questions about the countries from which we came, and told us that we were to consider ourselves his guests during our stay in Voo-ad. I told him that I should like very much to make the necessary re-

pairs on our anotar and depart as quickly as possible, if he would have the propeller returned to me.

"You see, we have been away from home for a long time; and we are anxious to return."

"I can very well understand that," he replied, "but we shall all be very much disappointed if you do not remain with us at least a couple of days. This portion of Anlap is almost a wilderness, and we have no neighbors who are friendly and very few visitors; so you can see that you would be doing us a great favor if you would remain a short time—we hear so little of the outside world of Amtor."

"We are really in Anlap?" I asked; "then perhaps you can tell us the general direction of Korva."

"I have heard of Korva," he replied, "but I do not know where it lies. Now please tell me that you will remain at least two days, as I wish to arrange a banquet and entertainment for you before you depart."

Under the circumstances the only decent thing we could do, in view of his generous hospitality, was to remain; so we told him it would be a pleasure to accept his invitation. He seemed genuinely pleased, and directed Ata-voo-med-ro to show us about the city and see that we wanted for nothing which might enhance the pleasure of our visit in Voo-ad.

Across from the jong's palace was a very large building—it must have been fully two hundred feet in diameter—that attracted our immediate attention when we left the palace with Ata-voo-med-ro. The building was an enormous dome at least a hundred feet high. It dwarfed everything around it. Naturally, it intrigued our curiosity; and I asked Ata-voo-med-ro what it was.

"You shall see it before you leave Voo-ad," he replied. "I shall leave it

until the very last, as the supreme moment of your visit to our city. I can guarantee that you will find it extremely interesting."

HE led us about the city, showing us the shops, the flowers and shrubbery that grow in profusion, and calling our attention to the carvings on the buildings. He also took us into an art shop where the work of the best artists of Voo-ad was on exhibition. These people show remarkable aptitude in reproducing natural objects with almost photographic fidelity, but there was not the slightest indication of creative genius in any of the work we saw.

While all the people looked and dressed much alike, we saw many doing menial work; and I asked Ata-voo-med-ro if there were different castes among them.

"Oh, yes," he replied; "all the klooms and above are servants; voo-meds who have no du are in the next higher class; they are the artisans; then come the voo-meds with a du—that is the class I am in. We are just below the nobles, who run from voo-yor-yorko to voo-med; royalty is always under yorko. There are other caste divisions, but it is all rather complicated and I am sure would not interest you."

Perhaps the above has not interested you; but in English it is a little more interesting, as it gives some meaning to their strange numerical names. What he said was that all the 2,000,000's and above were servants; the 1,000,000's with no prefix letter (du) were in the artisan class; then came his class, the 1,000,000's with a letter; the nobles run from 100,000 to 1,000,000; and royalty is always under 1,000. Vik-vik-vik's 999 is always the jong's name or number.

These high numbers do not mean that there are that many people in

Voo-ad; it is merely a naming system, and just another indication to me of their total lack of creative genius.

Duare and I spent two very dull days in Voo-ad, and in the afternoon of the second day we were summoned to attend the banquet being given by the jong. The table, built in the form of a hollow ring with people sitting on both sides of it, was in a circular room. There were about two hundred guests, all apparently of the same sex; for all were similarly garbed and looked more or less alike. They had plenty of hair on their heads, but none on their faces. There was a great deal of chattering and laughter, and those perpetual, frozen smiles when they were not laughing. I overheard a great deal of the conversation which elicited laughter, but could find nothing to laugh at.

Duare, who sat between Vik-vik-vik and me, remarked that some article of food she was eating was delicious, whereat Vik-vik-vik and others within hearing broke into laughter. It didn't make sense. I like to see people happy, but I also like to feel that it is because they have something to be happy about.

The food was really delicious, as were the wines; and the guests ate and drank what seemed to Duare and me enormous amounts. They seemed to derive far more pleasure and gratification from eating and drinking than the act warranted; some even swooned with rapture. I found it rather disgusting, and heartily wished that the banquet was over, so that Duare and I might take our leave. We both wanted a good night's rest, as we expected to leave the next day; and I still had the propeller to adjust—after it was returned to me. I asked the jong if he had arranged to have it returned to me immediately.

"You shall have it in plenty of time before you leave," he replied, with that

kindly smile of his.

"We should like to leave as early tomorrow as possible," I said, glancing at Duare.

I was immediately concerned by her appearance; there was a startled, almost frightened look in her eyes. "Something is happening to me, Carson," she said.

I started to rise. A strange sensation pervaded me. I could not move. I was paralyzed from the neck down!

CHAPTER III

Living Death

I LOOKED around at the others at the table; they were still laughing and chattering—and they were moving their arms and bodies. They were not paralyzed—only Duare and I. I looked at Vik-vik-vik; he was staring at us intently.

"Here is a very choice fruit," he said, offering me something that looked like a cross between an avocado and a banana.

Of course I could not raise a hand to take it; then he offered it to Duare, who was equally helpless. Vik-vik-vik waited a moment, and then he threw the soft fruit in her face.

"So you spurn my hospitality!" he cried, and then he broke into loud laughter, attracting the attention of all the guests to us. "Even so," he continued; "even though you refuse to accept what I offer, you shall still be my guests. You shall be my guests forever!" At that, everybody laughed uproariously. "What a notable addition you two will make to our collection in the Museum of Natural History. I think we have no pairs whatsoever in the upper categories, and we certainly have no male with gray eyes and yellow hair."

"We have no female in this category, my jong," said Ata-voo-med-ro.

"Right you are," assented Vik-vik-vik. "We have a female nobargan, but I presume we may scarcely maintain that she is of the same species as this woman."

"What is the meaning of all this?" I demanded. "What have you done to us?"

"The results of what we have done should, I think, be quite obvious to you," replied Vik-vik-vik, still laughing.

"You have trapped us by pretended friendliness, so that you may kill us. I have known of many treacherous and despicable acts, but this would bring a blush of shame to even a nobargan."

"You are mistaken," replied the jong; "we have no intention of killing you; as specimens, you are far too valuable. In the interests of science and education you will be preserved forever, serving a much better purpose than you could by continuing your silly, carnal lives." He turned to Ata-voo-med-ro. "Have them taken away," he ordered.

Two stretchers were brought; and we were carried out of the banquet hall by eight of the 2,000,000 caste, four to a stretcher. Out of the palace they carried us and across the plaza to the enormous dome I have already described—the building that Ata-voo-med-ro had told us would be left until the very last, as the supreme moment of our visit to Voo-ad. When I thought of the fiendish hypocrisy of the creature, I could have gnashed my teeth—which was about all there was left for me to do.

INSIDE, the dome was one enormous room with platforms, arranged in concentric circles, upon which were specimens of many of the larger beasts and reptiles of Amtor, supported by

props or scaffolding; while from the wall hung perhaps a couple of hundred human beings and nobargans in ingeniously devised slings which distributed their weight equally to all parts of their bodies.

Similar slings were adjusted to Duare and me, and we were hung upon the wall side by side in spaces beside which lettered plaques had already been affixed giving our names, the countries from which we came, our species, sex, and such other information as had evidently seemed to the Vooyorgans either educational or interesting. All this had been attended to while we were being entertained as honored guests!

The other specimens who were in a position to see us had watched our arrival and our "mounting" with interest. Others were quite evidently asleep, their chins resting upon their breasts. So we could sleep! Well, that would be something in the nature of a reprieve from the hideous fate which had overtaken us.

A group of Vooyorgans who had been in the building had gathered to watch us being hung in position; they read the placards describing us, and commented freely. They were most interested in Duare, who was possibly the first specimen of a female of our breed they had ever seen. I noticed one in particular who said nothing, but stood gazing at her as though entranced by her beauty. Watching him, I was suddenly impressed by the fact that the reddish median line was missing and that the two halves of his face were practically identical. This creature was, I presumed, what biologists term a sport. It differed, too, in other ways: it was not continuously smiling or laughing, nor did it keep up the incessant chatter of its fellows. (I find it difficult not to refer to these creatures as males. They all looked so exactly

alike that it was impossible to determine which were men and which women, but the fact that they all carried swords and daggers has influenced me to refer to them as males.)

They had left us our weapons; and I noticed that all the other exhibits in sight still wore theirs, except that their spears, if they had any, were fastened to the wall beside them. These weapons, of course, enhanced the educational value of the specimens; and it was quite safe to leave them with creatures who were paralyzed from the neck down.

Vooyorgans were constantly entering the building and strolling through the aisles to examine the exhibits. Sometimes they stopped to speak with a specimen; but as they usually poked fun at the poor helpless things, they were generally met with silence.

As darkness fell, the building was artificially illuminated; and great crowds of Vooyorgans came to look at us. They often stopped before us and laughed at us, making uncomplimentary and insulting remarks. These were the same people who had danced around us a couple of days before, showering us with flowers, welcoming us to their city.

After a couple of hours, the building was cleared and the lights dimmed; only a few guards remained. They were of the 1,000,000 caste, with letter, which includes what one might term the white collar class and the soldiers—if any of these plump, soft creatures could claim that honorable title.

ALTHOUGH the lights had been dimmed, it was still light enough to see quite plainly near the outer wall of the building, where we were hanging; as only the center lights had been completely extinguished.

About twenty guards had been left

in the huge building; though why even that many, I do not know; there was certainly no likelihood that any of us would riot or escape; one can't do either successfully while animated only from the larynx up.

Several of them were discussing us and congratulating Voo-ad upon having acquired such valuable additions to her Museum of Natural History.

"I have always wanted to see a woman," said one. "These other specimens are always talking about their women. They differ somewhat from the males, don't they? Now, this one has an entirely different figure and a far more delicate face than the male; it also has much more hair on its head—more like we Vooyorgans."

"The gray eyes and yellow hair of the male make him an outstanding exhibit," said another. My eyes are a gray-blue, and sometimes look gray and at others blue. I guess it is hard to tell which color they really are, but my hair is *not* yellow; although Amtorians usually describe it as such, they having no word for blond.

One member of the guard standing in front of us was very quiet; it neither laughed nor gabbled. Suddenly it commenced to shiver, as though with ague; then it reeled drunkenly and fell to the floor, where it writhed as though in an epileptic fit, which I thought was what ailed it.

"Dan-voo-med is about to divide," remarked one of its fellows. A couple of others glanced at D-1,000,000 and sauntered off unconcernedly. "You'd better get a couple of stretchers," the first speaker called after them.

A companion looked down at Dan-voo-med, writhing, groaning, and struggling on the floor. "It is about time," it said. "Dan-voo-med was commencing to worry; *od* feared that *od* might be one of those unfortunate ones who

die before they reproduce their kind." (*Od* is a neuter pronoun analogous to *it*.)

The creature's struggles had by now become violent; its groans and screams filled the vast chamber, echoing and re-echoing from the domed ceiling; and then, to my horror, I saw that the creature was splitting apart along the reddish median line I have described—right down the center of its head and body.

With a last, violent convulsion, the two halves rolled apart. There was no blood. Each half was protected by a thin, palpitating membrane, through which the internal organs were clearly observable. Almost immediately two stretchers were brought and the two halves were placed upon them and carried away. That both were still alive was evident, as I saw their limbs move.

Poor Duare was as white as a ghost, and almost nauseated by the revolting thing that we had witnessed. "Oh, Carson," she cried; "what manner of horrid creatures are these?"

Before I could reply, a voice from my other side exclaimed, "Carson! Carson Napier! Is it really you?"

CHAPTER IV

An Old Friend

I TURNED to look. The voice came from a man hanging on the wall beside me. I recognized him immediately. "Ero Shan!" I cried.

"And Duare is here, too," he said; "my poor friends! When did they bring you here?"

"This afternoon," I told him.

"I have been asleep," he said; "I try to sleep as much as I can; it is one way of passing away a lifetime hanging on a wall;" he laughed, a little wryly. "But what ill luck brings you here?"

I told him briefly, and then asked how he had ever come to leave beautiful Havatoo and get into such a predicament as this.

"After you and Duare escaped from Havatoo," he commenced, "the Sanjong (rulers of Havatoo) commissioned me to attempt to build an aeroplane from your plans. I discovered that some of the essential features you must have carried in your head, for they were not on your drawings."

"That is too bad," I said; "they were not on the drawings that I left in Havatoo; because I had become accustomed to keeping the final drawings in the anotar after it had neared completion. I really don't know why I did so."

"Well, I finally achieved an anotar that would fly," he continued; "though I nearly killed myself half a dozen times in the attempt. Some of the best minds in Havatoo were working with me, and finally we designed and built a plane that would really fly. I was never so delighted with anything in my life; I wanted to be up all the time, and I kept going farther and farther from Havatoo. I flew Nalte to Andoo to see her parents and her people, and what a sensation the anotar was there!"

"Oh, tell us about Nalte," exclaimed Duare. "How is she?"

"She was well and happy the last time I saw her," said Ero Shan; "I hope she still is."

"Possibly well; but not happy, with you gone," said Duare.

"And to think that we shall never see one another again," he said, sadly; "but then," he exclaimed more brightly, "I have you two now; your misfortune is my good luck; though I'd forfeit it to have you safely out of here."

"Go on with your story," I urged; "tell us how you got into this fix—an exhibit in a museum of natural history!"

"Well, I had flown some distance from Havatoo one day into an unexplored district to the southwest, when I ran into the worst storm I have ever encountered in my life; it was of a violence that beggars description and was accompanied by clouds of hot steam."

"The same storm that drove us north to Mypos," I suggested. "The Sun broke through rifts in the cloud envelopes, causing terrific winds, and making the ocean boil."

"It must have been the same storm," agreed Ero Shan. "Anyway, it carried me across a sea to this land; and when I was close to Voo-ad, my engine quit; and I had to come down. People came running from the city—"

"And danced around you and threw flowers at you," I interrupted.

Ero Shan laughed. "And fooled me completely. Did Vik-vik-vik give a banquet for you?" he asked.

"This afternoon," I said. "We seem to come to grief wherever we go—even in beautiful Havatoo."

"I MUST tell you," said Ero Shan; "after you two escaped, the Sanjong reviewed their findings on Duare and discovered that they had erred in condemning her to death. You are both now free to return to Havatoo."

"That is splendid!" I exclaimed, laughing. "Won't you please tell Vik-vik-vik?"

"At least," said Duare, "if we can retain our sense of humor we shall not be entirely miserable—if I could only forget the horrible thing we just witnessed while you were asleep."

"What was that?" asked Ero Shan.

"One of these creatures had an epileptic fit, and fell apart," I explained. "Have you ever seen anything like that?"

"Often," he said.

"The halves seemed to be still alive

when they carried them away," said Duare.

"They were," Ero Shan told her. "You see, these creatures are amoebic neuters; and their dividing is the physiological phenomena of reproduction. There are neither males nor females among them; but more or less periodically, usually after enjoying an orgy of eating and drinking, they divide into two parts, like the amoeba and other of the Rhizopoda. Each of these parts grows another half during a period of several months, and the process continues. Eventually, the older halves wear out and die; sometimes immediately after division and sometimes while still attached, in which case the dead half merely falls away, and the remaining half is carted off to make itself whole. I understand that this division occurs about nine times during the life of a half."

"They are without sentiments of love, friendship, or any of the finer characteristics of normal human beings; and because they cannot create their kind, they have no creative genius in art or letters; they can copy beautifully, but are without imagination, except of the lowest order."

"Their reception of you was typical. Being weaklings, averse to physical combat, they use hypocrisy as a weapon. Their singing, their dancing, their flower throwing are all instruments of deception; while they were feteing you, they were having your placards lettered; duplicity is their outstanding characteristic."

"Is there no escape?" asked Duare.

"There is a man near me who comes from a city called Amlot, somewhere in Anlap, who tells me he has been here fully a hundred years and that in all that time no one has escaped."

"Oh, why couldn't they have killed us!" exclaimed Duare; "it would have

been much kinder."

"The Vooyorgans are not kind," Ero Shan reminded her.

WE slept. A new day came, bringing its string of sightseers. The creature that had shown an interest in Duare came early, and stood staring at her. For hours it loitered about her, always staring at her—whether in admiration or dislike, I could not tell. Unlike the others, it did not smile. Finally it came close and touched her leg.

"Get away from there!" I shouted.

It shrank back, startled; then it looked at me, and said: "I would not harm the woman."

"Who are you, anyway?" I demanded, "and why are you hanging around my mate? She is not for you; no woman is for you."

The creature sighed; it really looked unhappy. "I am Vik-yor," it said. "I am not like my fellows. I am different. I do not know why. I do not enjoy what they enjoy—eating and drinking until they fall apart. I shall never fall apart; I shall never divide; I am no good to myself nor to anyone else. If I could be always with such as she, I would be happy."

After a while Vik-yor went away. His name, or number, indicated that he was of the royal caste. "How did he happen?" I asked Ero Shan.

"He is a sport," he explained; "they occur occasionally, especially in the older, or royal caste. This one may have been part of a division of Vik-vik-vik; when it grew its other half, it was identical with the original half, and there was no line of demarcation between the two halves—no line of cleavage. I suppose that, like the first amoebae, which must have had a tendency to develop into some higher form of life, these creatures show the same tendency by not dividing; possibly it is a step toward

a form of human being like ourselves."

"It will take several million years and nothing short of a miracle," said Duare.

"The fact that he is so definitely attracted to you," said Ero Shan, "would indicate that he is groping for something better and nobler than just being an amoeba. Why don't you encourage him a little?—I mean be kind to him. A friend here might be a very valuable asset."

Duare shuddered. "They are all so repulsive to me," she said. "I am always expecting them to fall apart."

"Vik-yor can't fall apart," Ero Shan reminded her.

"Well, that is at least something in his favor. Perhaps I'll try what you suggest, Ero Shan. It can't do any harm. I might even try being what Carson calls a vamp and make Vik-yor fall in love with me," she said, laughing.

"I think he already has," I said.

"Jealous?" demanded Duare.

"Of an amoeba? Scarcely."

"I think he is a male amoeba," teased Duare; "he has already learned to paw."

CHAPTER V

The Fascination of Vik-yor

WELL, Vik-yor kept coming to the museum every day; and now we all tried to be decent to him. His devotion to Duare was almost doglike, and she quite startled me by encouraging him. It didn't seem possible that Duare of Vepaja, the daughter of a thousand jongs, who had been brought up to consider herself as near a goddess as the Vepajans know, could try to arouse the love of such a creature as Vik-yor.

I joked her about it. "If I were only an amoeba," I said, "you would not have scorned my love for so long as you did; you would have sought after me

and made love to me yourself."

"Don't be horrid," said Duare; "to win our freedom, I would make love to a Myposan."

"Do you think you are going to win our freedom?" I asked.

"I am going to try," she said.

"But what good would freedom do three people paralyzed from the neck down?"

"There is freedom in death," she said.

"You mean you are going to try to get Vik-yor to kill us?" I demanded.

"As a last resort," she replied: "Wouldn't that be better than life here?—The man from Amlot has been here a hundred years!"

"But Vik-yor would never kill you," said Ero Shan.

"He wouldn't know he was killing me."

"How do you plan on doing it? I asked.

"I am going to teach Vik-yor how to use your r-ray pistol," she explained, "and tell him that if he will put it against our hearts and squeeze the trigger, we'll all join him outside and run away, as that will liberate our other selves from the flesh that now holds them."

"What makes you think he wants to run away with you?" I demanded.

"I have learned much about men since I left my father's palace in Vepaja."

"But Vik-yor is not a man," I argued.

"He's getting there," said Duare with a twinkle in her eye.

"He's just a damn rhizopod," I growled; "and I don't like him."

The next day, when he came around, Duare really went to work on him. "I should think you would be bored to death here in Voo-ad," she said; "you are so different from all the others."

Vik-yor really smiled. "Do you think

I am?" he asked.

"Certainly I do," cooed Duare. "You should be out in the world where there are things to see and things to do—where there are life and action and beautiful women."

"The most beautiful woman in the world is here," said Vik-yor, getting bold. "Oh, Duare, you are the most beautiful thing I ever saw!"

"And paralyzed from the neck down," said Duare. "Now, if I were not paralyzed and we were free, we could all go out into the world in our anotar and have a wonderful time."

"Do you mean that you would take me?" he asked.

"Of course," said Duare.

"Could I be with you always?" he demanded. It was a good thing for Vik-yor that I was paralyzed.

"You could be with me as much as possible," said Duare.

VIK-YOR looked at her for a long time—one of those devouring, possessive looks that send husbands to the upper dresser drawer looking for the family gun.

Vik-yor came close to Duare. "I can free you," he whispered, but I heard him.

"How?" demanded the practical Duare.

"There is an antidote for the poison that paralyzed you," explained Vik-yor. "It is necessary that this be kept on hand; for sometimes, when they have drunk too much wine, our own people make a mistake and drink the poison intended for a potential exhibit. A single drop on the tongue, neutralizes the poison in the nerve centers."

"When will you bring it?" asked Duare, "and how can you give it to us and free us without the guards knowing?"

"I shall come at night and bring

poisoned wine to the guards," explained Vik-yor; "then I can free you, and we can escape from the city."

"We shall all be very grateful," said Duare, "and we will take you with us."

"I shall free only you," said Vik-yor; "these others mean nothing to me; and I do not wish your mate along, anyway."

For an amoeba, Vik-yor seemed to be doing quite well along evolutionary lines; he was by now at least a louse. What the future held for him, I could not predict—unless I became rid of my paralysis; then, I was sure, my prophetic powers would approach the miraculous. So it didn't want me along!

To that proposition of Vik-yor, Duare shook her head. "I will not go without Carson of Venus and Ero Shan," she said.

"I will not free them," replied Vik-yor: "I do not like him;" he nodded in my direction. "He does not like me. I think he would like to kill me, and I am afraid of him."

"Would you kill Vik-yor, if you were free, Carson?" asked Duare.

"Not if he behaves himself," I replied.

"You see!" said Duare; "Carson says that he will not kill you if you behave yourself."

"I will not free him," replied Vik-yor, stubbornly. Evidently he didn't intend to behave himself.

"Very well," said Duare, "there is nothing more to be said on the subject; but if you will not do that much for me, you needn't come and talk to me any more. Please go away."

Vik-yor hung around for a while trying to get Duare to talk to him; but she wouldn't say a word, and finally he walked away and left the building.

"That is that," I said: "Our little scheme has failed; the triangle is dis-

rupted; your boy friend has gone off in a huff, and you will not see him again."

"You don't know your amoebae," retorted Duare; "it will be back."

"**I** HAVE a plan, Duare," I said. "It would be better for one of us to escape, than for all of us to remain here forever. You have that opportunity, and there is no reason why Ero Shan and I should keep you from taking advantage of it."

"Never!" said Duare. "I will never go without you and Ero Shan."

"Listen," I said: "Let Vik-yor free you; then take my r-ray pistol. I think you know enough about the construction of the anotar to replace the propeller with Vik-yor's help. If you can't get away without him, you can always use the pistol on him if you find it necessary. Fly to Sanara; I am positive that it lies almost due south of us. Once there, I am sure that Taman will send an expedition to rescue Ero Shan and me."

"That is the best plan yet," said Ero Shan.

"I don't like the idea of going off and leaving you two," demurred Duare.

"It is our only chance," I told her; "but if Vik-yor doesn't come back, we'll not have even this chance."

"Vik-yor will come back," said Duare. It's amazing how well women know males—even male amoebae—for Vik-yor did come back. It was a couple of days before he came—two days of agonizing uncertainty. I could almost have hugged him when I saw him sidling in our direction. He was pretending to be deeply interested in some other exhibits. I don't know why I keep calling it *he*; but I suppose that when you know something has fallen in love with your wife, you just naturally don't think of it as *it*.

Anyway, it finally reached us. Pay-

ing no attention to Ero Shan or me, it hesitated before Duare, "Oh, you're back, Vik-yor!" she exclaimed: "I am *so* glad to see you. You've changed your mind, haven't you? You're going to let us all go away with you, out into that beautiful world I have told you about."

"No," said Vik-yor. "I will take you, but not the others; and if you will not come willingly, I intend to poison these two at the same time that I poison the guards; then you'll have to come with me alone, or be killed; for when Vik-vik-vik discovers that the effects of the poison have worn off, he will have you destroyed."

"Go with him, Duare," I said: "Never mind us."

Vik-yor looked at me in surprise. "Maybe I have been mistaken in you," it said.

"You certainly have," Duare assured it. "Carson is a very nice person, and we really should have him along in case we get into trouble; he's an excellent swordsman."

"No!" snapped Vik-yor. "I know why you want him along; you like him better than you do me. That is why I was going to poison him anyway before we left, but now I may change my mind."

"You'd better," exclaimed Duare, vehemently, "for if you harm him in any way, I'll kill you! Do you understand that? I'll go with you, but only on condition that no harm comes to Carson of Venus or Ero Shan."

"Very well," agreed Vik-yor. "I want you to like me; so I'll do all that I can to please you—except take these two with us."

"Is the anotar all right?" she asked him. "Have the people damaged it in any way?"

"It is all right," replied Vik-yor: "It stands in the plaza where you left it."

"And the part that fell off—do you know where that is?"

"Yes, and I can get it any time I wish; all I have to do is take poisoned wine to the home of the one who found it."

"When will you come for me?" asked Duare.

"Tonight," replied Vik-yor.

CHAPTER VI

Duare Escapes

"YOUR boy friend is the de'Medici of the amoebae," I remarked after Vik-yor had left us.

"It is horrible!" exclaimed Duare. "I shall feel like a murderer myself."

"You will be an accessory before the fact," I twitted her, "and so, equally guilty."

"Please don't joke about it," she begged.

"I am sorry," I said, "but to me these creatures are not human; poisoning them would be the same to me as spraying oil on a stagnant pond to kill off mosquito larvae."

"Yes," added Ero Shan: "Don't let it depress you; think of what they have done to us; they deserve no consideration nor pity from us."

"I suppose you are right," admitted Duare; "but, right or wrong, I'm going through with it."

The remainder of that day dragged on like a bad dream in clay up to its knees. When no sightseers or guards were near us, we went over our plans again and again. I urged on Duare the advisability of attempting to make at least a crude map of the country she would cover while searching for Sanara. She could estimate distances rather closely by the ground speed of the anotar, and her compass would give her her direction at all times. By noting all

outstanding landmarks on her map, she would be able to turn over to Taman some very valuable data for the rescue expedition.

Of course we had no idea of the distance to Sanara. Anlap, the land mass on which it was located, might be a relatively small island, or it might be a continent; I was inclined to think that it was the latter; Sanara might be three thousand or five thousand miles from Voo-ad. Even were it close, it might take Duare a long time to find it; you can't land any old place on Amtor and ask directions, even when there is any one to ask. Duare would have to find Sanara and recognize it before she would dare land. She might be a year finding it; she might never find it. As she would have to come down occasionally for food and water, there would always be the risk of her being captured or killed—and then there was Vik-yor! I certainly was going to be in for a lot of worrying—maybe for years; maybe for the rest of my life—worry and vain regret.

At long last night fell. More hours passed, and Vik-yor did not come. Only the guards remained in the museum—the guards and the living dead. A basto bellowed. How the dickens they ever got some of the big beasts they had on exhibit, I'll never know. A basto stands fully six feet tall at the shoulder and weighs twelve hundred pounds or more. Singing and dancing around one of them and throwing flowers at it wouldn't get you anything but a goring; then it would eat you.

THE bellowing of the basto started off the rest of the lower animals, including the nobargans, which growl and roar like beasts. We were treated to a diapason of savage discord for fully an hour; then they stopped as unaccountably as they had started.

"Your boy friend must have got cold feet," I remarked to Duare.

"Why would cold feet keep him from coming?" she wanted to know.

"I keep forgetting that you're not from the land of the free and the home of the brave."

"Where's that?" asked Ero Shan.

"It is bounded on the north by Canada, on the south by the Rio Grande, on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the west by the Pacific."

"That must be in deepest Strabol," said Ero Shan, "for I never heard of one of those places."

"Here comes Vik-yor!" exclaimed Duare, excitedly.

"Your gigolo comes!" I said, rather nastily I'm afraid.

"What is a gigolo?" asked Duare.

"A form of life lower than an amoeba."

"I am afraid that you do not like Vik-yor, my darling," said Duare.

"I am glad that there was a comma in your voice at the right place," I said.

"Don't be silly," said Duare.

I am inclined to believe that every one as much in love as I am with Duare waxes silly occasionally. Of course, I knew that Duare loved me; I knew that I could trust her to the ends of the world—but! That is a funny thing about love—that *but*. The thought that that pussy, amoebic neuter was in love with her, or as nearly so as the thing could understand love, and that it was going to be with her for an indefinite time, while I hung on a wall, dead from the neck down, got my goat. If you are a man and if you are in love, you will know just how I felt.

Vik-yor was carrying a jug. Knowing what was in that jug would have given me a strange sensation, if I could have felt any sensations; but I did feel disgust for the sneaking thing that

would take the life of its own fellows.

It came up to Duare. "Is all arranged?" she asked—"the anotar? the propeller?"

"Yes," it replied: "And we are very fortunate, for tonight Vik-vik-vik is giving a banquet; and every one will be so drunk that we can get away without being detected."

"You have the antidote?"

It withdrew a small vial from one of its pocket pouches and held it up to her. "This is it."

"Give me some right away," begged Duare.

"Not yet; I must remove the guards first;" then he raised the jug to his lips and pretended to drink.

One of the guards drew near. "Oh," said the guard, "you are Vik-yor! I thought some one had come in that was not permitted after closing hours. We are always glad to see royalty interested in the exhibits."

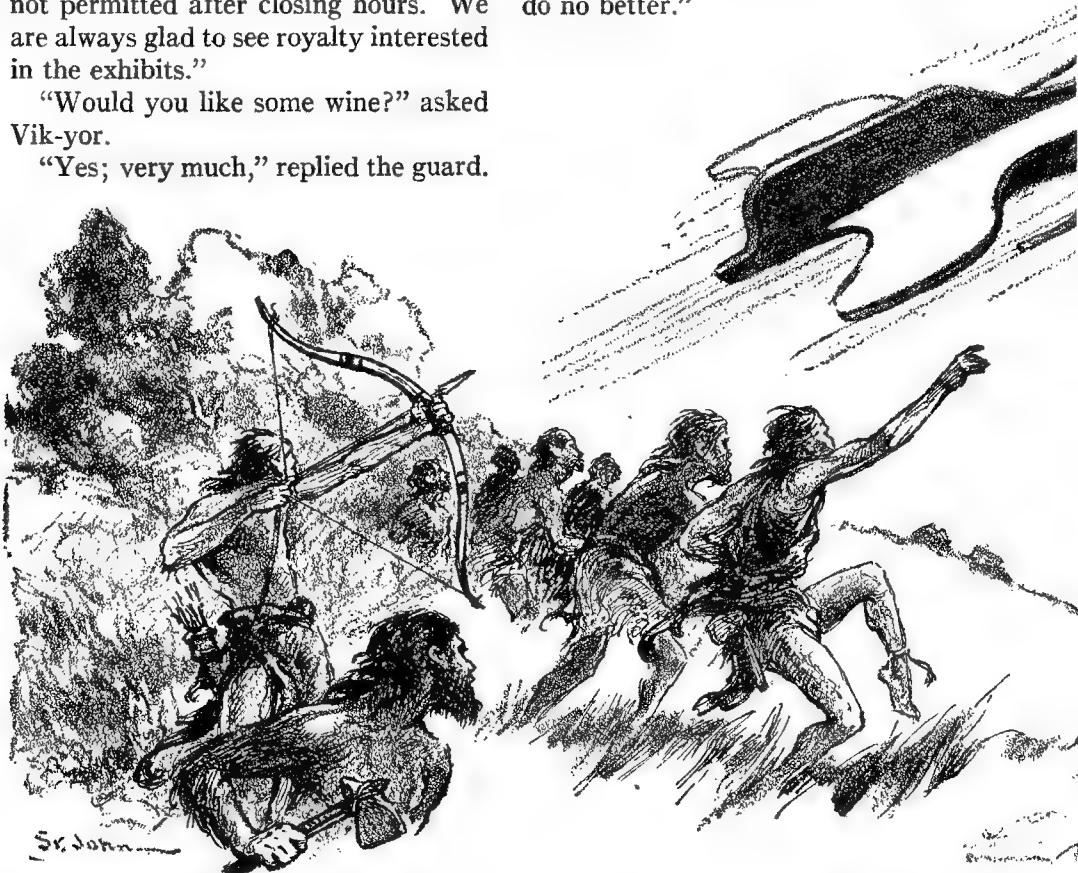
"Would you like some wine?" asked Vik-yor.

"Yes; very much," replied the guard.

"Call all your fellows, then," said Vik-yor, "and we will all drink together."

Pretty soon, all the guards were gathered there, drinking out of Vi-yor's jug. It was a horrible experience—hanging there watching wholesale murder being done. I had to ease my conscience by thinking how they had used similar duplicity to lure us to a fate even worse than death; and that, anyway, they were being given a pleasant ending; for soon they were all as drunk as hoot owls and laughing, dancing, and singing; then, one by one, they toppled over, dead. There were twenty of them, and they all died practically at our feet.

Vik-yor was proud as a peacock. "Don't you think I'm clever?" it asked Duare. "They never guessed that I was poisoning them; even Vik-vik-vik could do no better."



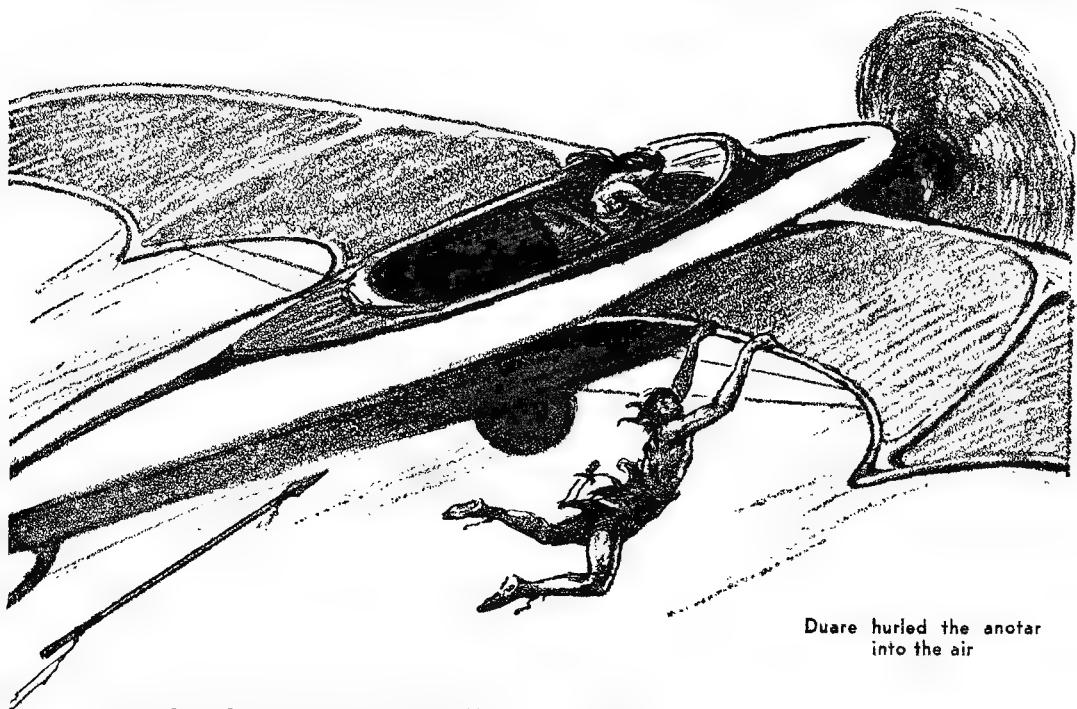
"You are quite remarkable," said Duare; "now give me the antidote."

Vik-yor fished down first into one pouch and then into another. "What did I do with it?" the creature kept repeating.

Duare was getting more and more frightened and nervous. "Didn't you bring it?" she demanded, "or was that

Vik-yor pulled its belt around until it could reach into the pouch that had been hanging down behind. "Here it is!" it cried. "My belt must have slipped around while I was dancing with the guards. I knew I had it; because I showed it to you. I couldn't imagine what had become of it."

"Quick! Give me some!" demanded



Duare hurled the anotar into the air

something else you showed me?"

"I had it," said Vik-yor. "What in the world did I do with it?"

IN spite of myself, I could scarcely keep from hoping that he would never find it. To be separated from Duare under circumstances such as these was unthinkable; death would have been preferable. I had a premonition that if she went away with Vik-yor I should never see her again. I commenced to regret that I had ever been a party to this mad enterprise.

"Look in the one behind," urged Duare; "you have looked in all the others."

Duare.

Vik-yor turned the vial upside down and shook it; then he removed the stopper and told Duare to stick out her tongue, which he touched several times with the stopper. I watched, spellbound. Ero Shan was craning his neck to see Duare.

Presently she gasped. "It's happening!" she said. "I can feel life coming to my body. Oh, Carson, if only you could come with me!"

Vik-yor was watching Duare intently. It reminded me of a big cat watching a mouse—a fat, obscene cat. Presently it stepped up to her and cut her down. It had to

support her for a moment; and when I saw its arm about her, it seemed to me that she was being defiled. Almost immediately, however, she was able to stand alone; and then she moved away from him and came to me. She couldn't reach my lips; I was hung too high on the wall, but she kissed my hand again and again. I could look down and see her doing it, but I could not feel the touch of her lips.

Vik-yor came up behind her and laid a hand on her shoulders. "Quit that!" it said.

Duare reached up and removed my r-ray pistol from its holster. I thought she was going to use it on Vik-yor, but she didn't. "Why don't you?" I asked her, looking meaningfully at Vik-yor.

"Not yet," she replied.

"Come!" ordered Vik-yor.

"You'd better take the holster, too," I said. She came and got it; and again she clung to my hand, kissing it. This time Vik-yor jerked her away roughly.

"You may not guess it, Vik-yor," I said, "but some day you are going to die for what you think you are going to do and what you have done and even for what you never will do; and I am going to kill you."

The thing just laughed at me, as it dragged Duare away. She was turning her dear face back toward me all the time. "Goodby, my darling!" she called to me, and then Vik-yor spoke.

"You will never see her again," it taunted me. "She is mine now, all mine."

"The thing lies!" cried Duare, and then: "Goodby, my darling, until I come back to you!"

"Goodby!" I called, and then she was lost to sight behind a great gantor, that elephantine beast of burden such as I had seen in Korva.

I glanced at Ero Shan. There were tears in his eyes.

CHAPTER VII

Anxious Moments

VIK-YOR and Duare had not had time to leave the building before there came a great noise from the entrance—laughing and chattering and the scuffling of many feet; and presently I saw at least a hundred people lurch and stagger into view. It was Vik-vik-vik and the banquet guests, and most of them were quite drunk.*

At sight of the guards strewn about the floor, Vik-vik-vik became violent and abusive. "The lazy beasts!" cried the jong, and went up and kicked one of them. It was then that they discovered that the guards were dead.

"They are all dead!" said one of the creatures. "Who has killed them?"

"Never mind that now," said Vik-vik-vik. "I'll find out later. First, I want to get the woman I came for. Come, Ata-voo-med-ro! Where is the antidote? We'll have her back to life and take her to the banquet. She's going to live in the palace with Vik-vik-vik. Other jongs have a vadjong; why shouldn't I?"

"You should!" cried some sychopant.

Vik-vik-vik and Ata-voo-med-ro searched the wall where Duare should have been. "She's gone!" exclaimed the latter.

*On Venus there is a tree which is highly prized by that planet's inhabitants. It grows in all parts of the planet, and in some locales is cultivated, as no other vegetable growth ever is on this fertile world where everything grows without attention. This tree contains a great amount of sap which can be drawn off, and after several days of fermenting, becomes a very potent alcoholic beverage, tasting very much like a rich, full-bodied peach-flavored brandy. This drink is much prized by Venusians, because it does not cause that common Earth reaction to drinking, the dreaded hangover. However, it swiftly deprives the drinker of all sense of feeling, and gives him visions almost like those of opium when indulged in to excess.—Ed.

The jong looked at me and demanded, "Where is she, creature?"

"How should I know?" I replied. "She has been gone a long time."

"How did she get away? Who took her?" demanded Vik-vik-vik.

"I do not know," I replied. "I had been asleep; when I awoke, she was gone."

Vik-vik-vik turned to the guests. "Search for her! Search the whole city! Hurry!" Then it said to Ata-voo-med-ro, "Summon all those who were on guard here today," and Ata-voo-med-ro scampered out after the others.

The jong looked searchingly at Ero Shan. "Did you see her go?"

"Yes," replied Ero Shan.

"Who took her?"

"A man."

"What man?" demanded the jong.

"Well it wasn't anyone you know, for the only men in Voo-ad are hanging on these walls."

"Who was it, then?"

"I never saw him before," said Ero Shan. "He had wings like an angan, but he was not angan; he was a man—a human man. He flew in and looked at the guards, and they all fell dead; then he cut the woman down and flew away with her. He said that he was coming back to look at you and all the rest of the Vooyorgans; so pretty soon you will all be dead—unless you liberate all the human beings in here. That was just what he said."

"Nonsense!" said Vik-vik-vik. "You are lying to me," but he looked worried.

Just then I heard the b-r-r-r of an r-ray pistol from the direction of the plaza, and there were screams and shouts mingled with it.

"WHAT was that?" demanded the jong.

"It sounds like the man who came for the woman," said Ero Shan. "When

he thought, his brain made a noise like that. I guess that is what killed the guards."

Vik-vik-vik left then, and he left on the run—probably for his palace.

"That was Duare!" I said to Ero Shan. "They caught her; she didn't have time enough."

"They haven't got her yet," said Ero Shan, as the humming of the pistol came to our ears again, mingled with the shouts and screams of the Vooyorgans.

"The whole population of the city must be out there, from the noise they're making. I wonder if Duare can fight them all off."

"They're not very keen on fighting, I should say," replied Ero Shan. "I think she has an excellent chance, if they don't succeed in damaging the anatar."

"Or if Vik-yor doesn't turn yellow."

"He couldn't be any yellower."

The noise in the plaza continued for some time, punctuated by occasional bursts of r-ray fire. When I heard these, I knew that Duare still lived and that they hadn't recaptured her yet; but between bursts I was nearly frantic with apprehension.

After a while the noise died down; there was no more shouting and the r-rays ceased to hum. What had happened? What had been the outcome of Duare's courageous attempt to escape? Had they recaptured her? Had they killed her? Had she really gotten away? Was I ever to know the answer to even one of these questions?

Ero Shan spoke to me, breaking the thread of my lugubrious reverie. "Perhaps we should never have let her go," he said.

"I am glad she went," I replied. "I would rather that she were dead than eternally condemned to this hideous existence."

"And of course," suggested Ero Shan,

taking a brighter view of the situation, "there is always the chance that she may succeed; and that some day your friend Taman, Jong of Korva, may march on Voo-ad and release us."

"But suppose," I countered, still prone to look upon the dark side because of my fear and sorrow concerning Duare; "suppose that Taman does come; will we be much better off? We shall still be paralyzed."

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Ero Shan: "Don't be so gloomy. When Taman takes Voo-ad, he can force the jong to furnish him with the antidote."

"You speak as though it were already an accomplished fact," I said, smiling. "That is the way we should feel. I am sorry that I have been so depressed; I'll buck up from now on. By the way, what was the purpose of that cock-and-bull story you told Vik-vik-vik—about the man who flew in and flew away with Duare?"

ERO SHAN laughed. "If you can put fear into the hearts of your enemies, you already have an advantage over them—especially if it is fear of the supernatural; that is something they can't combat. Killing you doesn't help any; they feel that it will only increase their danger. Then, too, I wanted to disabuse his mind of any suspicion he may have had that you or I were in any way responsible. Had he believed that, the reasonable thing for him to have done would have been to have had us destroyed, lest we free ourselves and others."

I scarcely slept all that night, wondering about Duare. I tried to question the new guards when they came on duty; but they just told me to shut up, and they kept as far away from Ero Shan and me as they could after they had removed the dead bodies of their fellows.

Long day after long day dragged slowly by, and still we heard no faintest word concerning Duare. The guards would not talk to us, neither would those who came to see the exhibits; it was evident that they had received orders, undoubtedly from the jong.

Had Duare escaped? If she had, she was off somewhere alone with Vik-yor. That thought added nothing to my peace of mind. I killed Vik-yor in some dozens of different and most satisfying ways during those long hours. I also killed Ata-voo-med-ro and Vik-vik-vik, nor did I stop there; I indulged in a perfect orgy of murder—the vain, wishful imaginings of impotency. However, it was very pleasurable imagining; and there are few pleasures in which one may indulge while hanging against a wall, dead from the neck down.

CHAPTER VIII

Duare Goes Into Action

VIK-YOR and Duare had not reached the exit when Vik-vik-vik and the banquet guests burst into the museum. "Quick! Hide!" whispered Vik-yor, dragging Duare back behind the body of the gantor. "The drunken fools!" muttered Vik-yor. "They have upset all my plans; now we may not get away at all."

"They have passed," said Duare, presently. "Now we may go on."

Vik-yor hesitated. "They may come back," it said.

"If they discover that I am gone, they'll make a search," said Duare; "then you will be caught."

"And killed," said Vik-yor, trembling. "But I won't be killed! I won't be here; they'll just find you; they won't know that I had anything to do with setting you free. You stay here; I'm going to join them and pretend that I

was at the banquet, too."

"You're going to do nothing of the sort," snapped Duare; "you're going out into the plaza and help me fix the anotar; you're going through with this."

"I am not," insisted Vik-yor. "Vik-vik-vik would have me killed if he knew I had set you free."

"If you don't come along with me," warned Duare, "he will know."

"How will he know?"

"I'll tell him!"

"No, you won't," snarled Vik-yor, and drew a dagger.

Duare whipped out the r-ray pistol. "Put that dagger back, or I'll kill you," she threatened.

Vik-yor hesitated. It knew nothing about an r-ray pistol, but it was an arrant coward, and Duare's tone of voice alone would have been enough to frighten it. It started to return the dagger to its sheath.

"No!" said Duare. "Give it to me—and your sword, too; you're not to be trusted."

Reluctantly, Vik-yor handed over the weapons. "Suppose they attack us now?" it asked.

"You can hide behind me," said Duare. "Come, now! We're going to the plaza." She had to poke the muzzle of the pistol in the middle of the thing's back in order to force it toward the exit. A moment later they were in the plaza. It was deserted at this time of night, and they crossed to the anotar in safety.

The propeller lay beneath it, and a hasty examination showed that it was undamaged; then she examined the flange, shrunk to the end of the crank-shaft, to which it had been bolted. The bolts were there and undamaged—the nuts must have vibrated off almost simultaneously; Kandar had evidently neglected to use either lock washers or cotter keys.

These Duare found among the spare parts in the cockpit of the anotar, together with the necessary nuts. Climbing forward on the wing, she told Vik-yor to hand up the propeller and then to come up himself and give her a hand. Together, they fitted the propeller over the bolts; and Duare started the nuts by hand; then she applied the wrench, a heavy tool that she had difficulty in handling in the awkward position in which she had to work.

She had two nuts securely set and cottered when the guests came rushing from the museum in search of her. "There she is!" cried one, discovering her almost immediately; and then they all came running toward the anotar. Vik-yor scrambled into the cockpit and hid. Duare switched the wrench to her left hand and drew her pistol.

"Keep away!" she called, "or I'll let you have it."

PERHAPS they didn't know what she was going to let them have; so they came on. The r-rays hummed from the muzzle of the weapon, and the leaders crumpled to the pavement. That stopped the others, at least for the time; and Duare continued to tighten the remaining nuts.

Vik-yor peeked from the cockpit; it saw the dead and heard the screams of the wounded. Things looked pretty safe to it so it crept out and came to Duare's side. Duare was working feverishly. She had thought everything out far in advance of either Carson or Ero Shan. Perhaps discovery by these Vooyorgans would make it more difficult than she had hoped, but she was still determined to go on with it—and flying away from Voo-ad without Carson and Ero Shan was no part of it.

The thing that she had planned on doing, after she and Vik-yor had repaired the anotar, was to force him to give up

the vial of antidote, even if she had to kill him to get it, and then to go back into the museum and free Carson and Ero Shan. Discovery by the Vooyorgans had greatly complicated matters, but it had not compelled Duare to give up the plan.

More creatures were now rushing into the plaza, and the anotar was surrounded. Again Duare was forced to stop her work and turn a stream of r-rays upon those who menaced her most closely, and again the others fell back. This time Vik-yor did not hide. Feeling safe under the protection of Duare, it remained and watched her using the pistol on its people. The thing intrigued it greatly and gave it ideas, one of which it put into practice almost immediately after Duare returned the pistol to its holster and went to work on the last remaining nut. While the girl's attention was centered on her work, Vik-yor stole up behind her and stealthily removed the pistol from its holster.

The first intimation Duare had that the weapon had been taken from her was the sudden b-r-r-r of r-rays. She wheeled about in astonishment to see Vik-yor pumping r-rays indiscriminately into the crowd surrounding the anotar. Many of the creatures were falling, dead and wounded; and the others were fleeing for the safety of nearby buildings.

"Give me that!" snapped Duare.

Vik-yor turned it on her. "Finish the work!" it said. "I want to get out of here."

"You fool!" cried Duare. "Turn that thing the other way; if you kill me, you'll never get away. Give it back to me!"

"No," said Vik-yor, sullenly. "I shall keep it. Your only chance of getting away yourself is to do as I say. Do you think I'll give this thing back

to you, so that you can kill me? I am not such a fool."

DUARE returned to her work; she could wait. She gave the last nut its final turn and hammered in the cotter key, then she turned back to Vik-yor. "Get into the cockpit," she said, "we are ready to go."

Vik-yor climbed into the cockpit, and Duare took her place at the controls. The engine started, the propellor spun; the anotar moved. Duare taxied down wind to the far end of the plaza; then she came about into the wind. Hundreds of pairs of eyes watched her from windows and doorways, but no one ventured out to detain her—Vik-yor had been too unrestrained in firing practice.

The anotar gained speed, it rose gracefully into the air; and, turning south, disappeared into the night.

Vik-yor was terrified; it trembled and yammered in a frenzy of fear. "We shall fall!" it jibbered. "We shall fall!"

"Be quiet!" snapped the girl.

"Take me down! Let me out!"

Duare would have gladly done so had she had possession of the vial of antidote and her pistol. She did not reply, but elevated the nose of the anotar and rose higher. Vik-yor was cowering beside her, covering its eyes with its hands.

"Are you coming down?" it asked.

"Just a moment," said Duare, "don't look now." She climbed to five thousand feet. Wisps of cloud from the inner envelope whipped against the windshield; in the weird light of the Amtorian night, the ground was barely visible—it appeared much farther away than it really was.

Duare cut the engine and glided. "You may get out now," she said.

Vik-yor uncovered its eyes and looked over the side of the cockpit, and

then, with a scream, it shrank back. It was trembling so that it could scarcely speak. It glanced up and saw the clouds close above, and it screamed again.

"Quit screaming!" ordered Duare.

"You would have killed me," Vik-yor managed to say at last, "you would have let me get out way up here."

"Give me the antidote and my pistol, and I'll take you down and let you get out," offered Duare.

The creature looked over the side again, this time for much longer. "We do not fall," it said. Finding that the anotar remained aloft, it slowly regained a little composure, if not courage.

"Well," said Duare, "if you want to go down and get out, give me the vial and the pistol."

"You'll take me down and I'll keep them both," said Vik-yor.

"What makes you think so?" demanded Duare.

"This," said Vik-yor, showing the pistol against the girl's side, "take me down, or I'll kill you!"

Duare laughed at him. "And then what would happen to you?" she demanded. "Do you think this anotar flies itself? If I left these controls for a minute, the ship would dive nose first to the ground so fast that it would bury itself and you."

"You are lying," said Vic-yor. "It would come down by itself."

"That's just what I told you—it would come down by itself all right, but there would be nothing left of the anotar or us. Don't you believe me?"

"No, you are lying."

"All right, I'll show you," and with that, Duare put the ship into a spin.

Above the roar of the wind, rose the shrieks of Vic-yor. Duare levelled off at five hundred feet. "Now, do you think I was lying?" she asked. Her

voice was firm and level, betraying no slightest indication of the terror that had gripped her for the last two thousand feet of that long dive. Only twice before had she brought the anotar out of a spin, and then Carson had been beside her at the other controls. This time, up to the last moment, she had thought that she was not going to bring it out.

"Don't ever do that again!" wailed Vik-yor. "We might have been killed."

"Will you give me the vial and the pistol now?" asked Duare.

"No," replied Vik-yor.

CHAPTER IX

Vik-yor Becomes a Problem

BY the time morning came, and Vic-yor could look down and see the world passing slowly beneath them, it had lost much of its fear of the strange situation in which it found itself. It now had almost complete confidence in Duare's ability to keep the thing up in the air, and with returning confidence it commenced to think of other things than the hazards of flying.

"You kept pressing your lips to his hands," it said. "Why did you do that?"

Duare's thoughts were far away. "Eh?" she ejaculated. "Oh, because I love him."

"What is love?" asked Vik-yor.

"You would not understand, it cannot be explained to one who cannot know love. It is what one feels for one's mate."

"Did he like to have you press your lips to his hand?"

"I am sure he did, I certainly hope so."

Vik-yor held out his hand. "Do it to me," it directed.

Duare struck the hand away, and

shuddered. "You disgust me," she said.

"You belong to me," said Vik-yor. "You are going to teach me what love is."

"Don't talk about love to me," snapped Duare, "you defile the very name."

"Why don't you like me," asked Vik-yor.

"It is not alone because you are not a human being," replied the girl, "I have liked many of the lower animals. It is because you are cruel and cowardly, because you made me come away and leave my mate in that horrible place, because you haven't one of the finer characteristics of a man, because you are not a man. Have I answered your question?"

Vik-yor shrugged. "Well," it said, "it doesn't make much difference whether you like me or not. The thing is that I like you, what you like or don't like affects you, not me. Of course, if you liked me, it might be much more pleasant. Anyway, you belong to me. I can look at you, I can touch you. As long as I live you will be always with me. I never liked anyone before. I didn't know that there was such a thing as liking another creature. We Vooyorgans don't like anyone, nor do we dislike anyone. A person is with us today and gone tomorrow—it makes no difference to us. Before I commenced to change, I used to divide like the others. Even after being with one of my halves for years, I never missed it after we divided, nor did I ever have any feeling whatever for the new half that grew. Once I was half of Vik-vik-vik, the jong, I was the left half. It is the right half that retains the name and identity. I have always been a left half until now, now I am a whole, I am like you and Carson and Ero Shan—I am a man! After studying the ways of other forms of life, some of

the wise ones among us think that our right halves are analogous to the females of other species, and the left halves to the males, so, you see, I have always been a male."

"I am not interested," said Duare.

"But I am," said Vik-yor. "It makes no difference whether you are interested or not, if I am. I like to talk about myself."

"I can almost believe that you are a man," said Duare.

VIK-YOR was silent for some time.

It was occupied by gazing at this new world over which it was flying like a bird. Duare was trying to plan some way of getting hold of the vial and the pistol, her whole life, now, revolved about that one desire.

"I am hungry," said Vik-yor.

"So am I," agreed Duare, "but I don't dare land unless I have my pistol, we might be attacked."

"I can kill things with it," said Vik-yor. "Didn't you see me last night? I must have killed fifty."

"Firing into a crowd of hundreds is not the same as firing at a charging basto," said Duare, "where there were so many, you couldn't miss them all."

"Perhaps not," said Vik-yor, "but I shall keep the pistol. If you had it, you would kill me. What are you doing?" Duare was spiralling down above a large lake. "Look out!" cried Vik-yor. "We will be drowned, if you go into the water."

"All right," said Duare, "it is better to drown than starve to death. Will you give me the pistol?"

"No," said Vik-yor, "I would rather drown." As a matter of fact, it had suddenly concluded that this was just another attempt of the woman to frighten it into giving up the pistol. Vik-yor was far from being a fool. However, it was thoroughly shaken when

Duare failed to bring the anotar up and it settled upon the surface of the lake; for Vik-yor could not swim.

Duare took a drinking vessel from one of the compartments; and, going out upon the wing, dipped up some water. She took a long, satisfying drink; then she lay down on the wing and washed her hands and face.

"Give me some water," said Vik-yor, when she arose.

Duare dumped the remaining water from the vessel, and came back into the cockpit.

"Didn't you hear me?" demanded Vik-yor. "I told you to give me some water."

"I heard you," said Duare, starting the engine.

"Well, go and get me some," ordered the Vooorgan.

"When you give me my pistol," said Duare, taxiing for a take off.

"I will not give you the pistol," said Vik-yor.

"All right," said Duare, as she swept down the lake for the take off. "That was very good water, and we may not find fresh water again for days.

VIK-YOR said nothing, but it was doing a lot of thinking: maybe having a woman was not such a good thing after all; if it could learn to fly this thing, it could kill the woman and—well, what? That stumped Vik-yor. It couldn't go back to Voo-ad after what it had done, for Vik-vik-vik would surely have it killed; it couldn't live in this savage world full of terrible beasts and men.

Vik-yor was not the first to get hold of something and then not be able to let go—the Vooorgan was certainly in a fix; possibly as bad a fix as any amoeba had been in since the dawn of life on Amtor.

Duare continued to fly south, as she

couldn't carry out the plan she had in mind until she recovered the r-ray pistol. In the meantime she might find Sanara, in which event she would be among friends who would take the pistol away from Vik-yor. Presently there loomed ahead an obstacle that barred further flight toward the south—a forest that induced within her a little surge of nostalgia. Only in her native Vepaja had she ever seen another such forest. The tops of its trees were lost in the inner cloud envelope five thousand feet above the ground; the enormous boles of some of its giants were a thousand feet in diameter. In Vepaja the homes of her people were carved in living trees a thousand feet above the floor of the forest. One could not fly above such a forest, and threading one's way through its mazes was hazardous in the extreme. Carson might have ventured it, were it necessary; but not Duare. She turned toward the east, seeking a way around it.

She was becoming very hungry, but these mighty forests bore their fruits too high. The forest extended for perhaps a hundred miles, ending at the foot of a mountain range which presented an equally insurmountable obstacle to further southward flight, as its towering peaks were lost in the eternal clouds. Down its canyons roared mountain torrents, fed by the perpetual rains that fell upon its upper slopes. The torrents joined to form rivers which cut the alluvial plain that stretched eastward as far as the eye could reach, and these rivers united to swell a mighty waterway that rolled on toward the horizon and some distant, nameless sea.

Nowhere in all this vast and lonely wilderness had Duare seen a sign of human habitation; but there were grazing herds and prowling carnivores, and forests of small trees where edible fruits and nuts might be expected to abound.

IT might be all right to try to starve Vik-yor into submission, thought Duare, did that not also presuppose her own starvation; so the Vooyorgan won a moral victory, and Duare searched for a safe landing place near a forest. A herd of grazing herbivores galloped away as she dropped down and circled to reconnoiter before landing. Seeing no sign of dangerous beast, Duare brought the ship down close to the forest.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Vik-yor.

"Find something to eat," replied Duare.

"Bring me something, too," ordered the Vooyorgan.

"If you eat," said Duare, "you will get it yourself."

"I do not wish to go into the forest; some dangerous beast might attack me."

"Then you'll go hungry."

"I am starving," said Vik-yor.

DUARE climbed from the cockpit and dropped to the ground. She would have felt safer had she had the pistol, but she had learned that it was useless to ask for it.

"Wait for me!" called Vik-yor. Hunger had finally bested its cowardice, and it was climbing from the anotar. Duare did not wait, but continued on toward the forest. Vik-yor ran after her, and when it caught up with her it was out of breath. "Why didn't you wait for me?" it demanded. "You belong to me; you should do as I tell you."

Duare looked at it disgustedly. "I belong to a man," she said.

"I am a man," said Vik-yor.

"You wouldn't be a man in thirty million years; I am surprised that you even had nerve enough to crawl out of a stagnant pool."

They had entered the forest; and Duare was looking up at the trees in

search of food, when Vik-yor suddenly dashed past her and scrambled up a tree; then a hideous roar shattered the silence of the wood. Duare wheeled about. A tharban was creeping toward her. Vik-yor had seen it, and fled without warning her. He was now safely ensconced in a nearby tree, shaking as with palsy.

CHAPTER X

Vik-yor Is Captured

THE tharban might be described as the Amtorian lion, although it does not bear much resemblance to *Felis leo* except that it is a ferocious carnivore. It is much larger; its crimson coat is as brilliantly red as freshly spilled blood; its enormous jaws, splitting half the length of its head, are armed with sixteen or eighteen large fangs and its feet are equipped with three heavily taloned toes; it has a red mane, much like that of a horse; long, pointed ears, and the tail of a lion. It also has a most abominable disposition and an insatiable appetite.

For Duare, the situation was not overly auspicious. Though there were trees all around her, she could not possibly climb to safety before the creature could overhaul her.

"Shoot it!" she called to Vik-yor.

The Vooyorgan drew the pistol; but his hand shook so that he could not aim, and the r-rays buzzed futilely in many directions other than the right one.

"Look out!" cried Duare; "you'll hit me!"

The tharban appeared to be enjoying the situation, for it continued to creep slowly upon the prey which it knew could not escape.

"Throw the pistol down to me!" cried Duare.

"No!" shouted Vik-yor; "I won't give it to you—I told you I wouldn't."

"Fool!" screamed Duare. She faced the terrible creature with only a sword—a tin whistle would have been almost equally as effective. She was about to die, and Carson would never know. He would hang there on that wall until death released him, the longevity serum with which he had been inoculated in Vepaja, a curse rather than a blessing.

Suddenly the tharban halted in its tracks and voiced a thunderous roar; the very ground seemed to tremble to it. Duare realized that the creature was looking at something beyond and behind her, and she cast a quick glance in that direction. The sight that met her eyes appalled her. Slinking upon her from behind was a creature as large and as terrible as the tharban. Its body closely resembled that of a Bengal tiger; its head resembled that of the ancient sabre-tooth of Earth; from the shoulders, just anterior to the forelegs, grew two enormous chelae; and its jaws were as terribly armed as those of the tharban.

This creature, Duare knew well; for they haunt the forests of Vepaja from the ground to the highest branches where life may be found, and they prey upon all forms of life. By the advent of this terrible beast, Duare's situation was altered only to the extent of the probability of which one reached her first; and they were about equidistant from her.

Answering the tharban's roar, came the scream of the tongzan. Now the tharban charged, fearing its prey would be stolen by the other. The same fear must have motivated the tongzan simultaneously, for it charged, too. And Duare, between these two engines of destruction, seemed about to be torn to shreds. Vik-yor, safe in a tree, watched the events unfolding beneath it with

thoughts only of itself. With Duare dead, it could no longer travel in the anotar; it would be earthbound, prey to some hideous creature such as those two which were about to rend and devour Duare. Vik-yor felt very sorry for itself, and cursed the hour that it had looked upon a woman or thought that it might emulate a man.

AS the two beasts rushed for her, Duare threw herself to the ground, and the creatures met above her. She felt their pads and talons upon her body; their roars and screams resounded in her ears as they battled above her. Presently one of them gave back a few feet, uncovering her, and then Duare rolled cautiously aside. Now she could see them, so engrossed were they in their duel that they paid no attention to her. The tongzan had already lost one of its eyes and most of its face, but it held to the tharban with one mighty chela, drawing it closer to those terrible jaws and cutting and rending it with its other chela.

Duare moved cautiously to a nearby tree and clambered to safety; she had been careful to select a small tree, lest the tongzan's mate should come, for they cannot climb a tree of small diameter. From the safety of her sanctuary, she watched the bloody duel below. The tharban had inflicted hideous punishment on the tongzan, which was literally torn to ribbons from its muzzle back to its shoulders, nor was the tharban in much better shape. It, too, was torn and bleeding, and one foot had been completely severed by a giant chela, which was now groping for its throat while its mate held the huge tharban in a vicelike, unbreakable grip.

The blinded tongzan screamed continually, and the tharban roared; the forest reverberated to the hideous din. Vik-yor still clung to the tree, shaking

from terror. Duare, in an adjoining tree, viewed it with contempt—the thing that aspired to be a man. She glanced down at the battling carnivores; the tongzan was clawing the tharban to ribbons with the talons of both its powerful front feet, and the blindly groping chela was finding the throat. At last, spreading wide, it found its goal; and then those mighty nippers closed; and the tharban's head rolled upon the ground, severed as cleanly as by a guillotine.

For a moment the victor stood over its fallen antagonist, and then it commenced to devour it. Blind, horribly mutilated, still its insatiable maw must be filled. Blood flowed from its countless wounds in veritable torrents, yet it ate and ate until it sank lifeless upon the bloody remains of its repast—dead from loss of blood.

DIRECTLY above her, Duare discovered a bunch of grape-like fruit; and soon she, too, was satisfying her hunger; while Vik-yor eyed her enviously. "Bring me some of that," it said.

"Get your own," advised Duare.

"There is no fruit in this tree."

Duare paid no more attention to him; looking around, she discovered a tree that bore nuts which she recognized as both delicious and nutritious. She climbed down from her tree and swarmed up another; here she gathered nuts and ate them. She filled her pouch with them and descended.

"I am going," she called to Vik-yor; "if you wish to come with me you had better get down out of that tree." She would have gladly gone off and left it, but for the pistol; which she must have to carry out her plan.

"I am afraid," cried Vik-yor, "another of those creatures might come along."

Duare continued on toward the anotar. Suddenly she stopped and called back to Vik-yor: "Stay where you are! Hide! I'll come back for you later—if they don't get you." She had seen a dozen men sneaking toward the anotar; they were short, squat, hairy men; and they carried spears. Duare broke into a run, and so did the warriors—it was a race for the anotar. Duare had a slight advantage—she was nearer the anotar than they, and she was fleeter of foot.

One of the warriors outdistanced his fellows, but Duare reached the plane first and clambered into the cockpit just as the warrior arrived. As he clambered onto the wing in pursuit of her, the engine started and the propeller whirred. The ship taxied along the rough ground, and the warrior had all he could do to keep from being thrown off. It rose and zoomed upward. The man clutched the edge of the cockpit; he looked down, preparing to jump; he had had enough; but when he saw the ground so far below, he shut his eyes and seized the edge of the cockpit with both hands.

Duare banked; and the man's body slid its full length along the wing, while he clung frantically to his hold. He screamed. Duare banked again, more steeply, trying to shake him off; but he hung on with a grip of death; then, as she flattened out, he clambered into the cockpit beside her.

FOR a moment he just sat there, panting, limp as a dishrag; too terrified to move. Duare fastened her safety belt and climbed. The man looked over the side, and drew a crude dagger from his belt. He stuck the point of it against Duare's side.

"Take me down," he commanded in a coarse guttural. "If you don't, I'll kill you."

"And this thing will fall, and you'll be killed," warned Duare. "You'd better take that knife out of my side if you want me to take you down."

He pulled the knife back a couple of inches. "Hurry!" he said; "take me down."

"Will you promise to let me go, if I take you down?" asked the girl.

"No; you belong to me. I take you back to the village."

"You're making a mistake," said Duare. "If you promise to let me go, I'll take you down. If you don't—"

"What?" asked the man. "I'm going to keep you. What do you think you would do if I don't promise to let you go?"

"I'll show you!" said Duare, with a trace of venom in her voice. "You asked for it, and you're going to get it."

"What did I ask for?" demanded the man.

"This!" said Duare, and looped the anotar.

Screaming, the man plunged to his doom. He fell not far from his companions, who came over and examined the splash and the hole his body had made in the ground.

"There is not much left of Djup," said one.

"The thing is coming back," said another, looking up into the sky.

"If it comes close, we can kill it with our spears," said a third; "we have killed big birds before."

"We cannot kill it," said the first warrior; "because it is not alive. I am going into the forest, where it cannot follow us," and as he started on a run for the forest, the others followed him.

Duare tried to head them off; but fear gripped them, and they would not turn aside; they ran into the forest at the very point at which Duare had emerged. They saw the dead bodies of the tharban and the tongzan, and sat

down and commenced to eat. They ate like beasts, tearing the meat from the carcasses in great chunks and growling ceaselessly.

Vik-yor sat in the tree above them, paralyzed with fear. Oh, why had it ever left Voo-ad? What in the world had made it think that it wanted a woman? Now, it hated her. It was all her fault. It did not know it, but it was learning fast that there is always a woman at the bottom of everything—especially trouble.

One of the warriors looked up and pointed. "What is that?" he asked his fellows. It was Vik-yor's foot carelessly protruding below some foliage.

"It is a foot," said another.

"There must be a man at the end of it."

"Or a woman! I am going up to see."

The shaking of the tree caused Vik-yor to look down. When it saw one of the hairy warriors ascending, it screamed and started up the bole. The warrior pursued; and, being a better climber than Vik-yor, soon overhauled it. Vik-yor forgot about the r-ray pistol that was hidden in one of its pocket pouches. With it, it could have routed fifty hairy warriors.

The warrior seized Vik-yor by one of its ankles and dragged it down. Vik-yor would have fallen to the ground, had the warrior not supported it. Hanging to its captive's hair, the warrior descended.

CHAPTER XI

Vik-yor Becomes an Aviator

DUARE cruised about near the forest, waiting for either the warriors or Vik-yor to come out; she would not abandon the pistol. Had she known what was going on in the wood, her

hopes would have been crushed.

Vik-yor, trembling and almost too weak to stand, was surrounded by its captors, who were discussing it. "We have just eaten," said one; "we can take this back to the women and children." He pinched Vik-yor. "It is tender; perhaps we can find something else for the women and children. I am sure that I could eat some of this tonight."

"Why not eat it here?" demanded another. "The women and children will make a loud noise if we don't give them some."

"It is mine," said the warrior that had climbed the tree after Vik-yor. "I am going to take it back to the village." He tied a leather thong about Vik-yor's neck, and dragged the creature along behind him. The other warriors followed.

When they came out into the open, Duare saw them and flew closer. There was Vik-yor! How was she ever to recover the pistol now? The warriors looked up at the anotar and discussed it. Some of them thought that they should go back into the forest; but when Duare circled high above them and gave no indication that she was going to swoop down on them, they lost their fear and kept on toward their village.

The village lay on the bank of a river not far from where Vik-yor had been captured. It was not a village easily seen from the air, as it consisted of a few poor, grass shelters scarcely three feet high, the village blending into the tall grasses among which it was built.

Before they reached the village, Duare circled very low above the little party and begged Vik-yor to drop the pistol, thinking that she could dive and frighten the warriors away from it before they could recover it; but Vik-yor,

with the stubbornness of the ignorant, refused.

At last they reached the village, where a couple of dozen filthy women and children ran out to meet them. They tried to lay hands on Vik-yor, as they screamed for meat; and Duare, circling low again, heard them and realized that Vik-yor might soon be lost to her and the pistol along with him.

Banking low above them, she called out, "Look out! I'm coming down to kill you!" Then she dove for them. She knew that she was taking long chances, for they were sure to hurl their spears; and one lucky hit might cause her to crash—but she must have that pistol!

In a shower of spears, she came down on them, her landing gear lowered with which to rake them. It was too much for them; they turned and ran; so did Vik-yor, whose life was endangered as much as were the lives of the others. Fortunately, Vik-yor ran in the opposite direction from that taken by the savages; and Duare landed beside him.

"Get in!" she cried. "Hurry! Here they come!"

SURE enough, they were coming after their meat—a half dozen women in the lead—but they were too slow. Duare easily outdistanced them, and a moment later the anotar rose into the air and flew away.

"If I had had that pistol," said Duare, "none of these things would have happened. Now give it to me, so that we won't have to go through things like that again."

"No," said Vik-yor sullenly.

"I suppose you'd rather be killed by a wild beast or eaten by savages than give me that pistol so that I can protect us."

"I shall not be eaten by savages nor killed by wild beasts," said Vik-yor.

"I am going back to Voo-ad; nothing that Vik-vik-vik can do to me would be as bad as what I've gone through. Take me back to Voo-ad at once."

"And be hung up on a wall again! Do you think I'm crazy? But I'll tell you what I will do: If you'll give me the pistol and vial, I'll take you back; and I'll get word to Vik-vik-vik that I made you take me away."

The Vooorgan shook its head. "No," it said. "With the pistol that kills so easily, I might be able to make Vik-vik-vik see reason. If I go back without it, I shall be killed. I have been watching you fly this thing; I can fly it. If you will not take me back to Voo-ad, I shall kill you and fly back by myself. Perhaps that would be the better way after all. Think what an impression I would make if I flew into Voo-ad all alone. I think that then I might kill Vik-vik-vik and become jong. The more I think of it, the better I like the idea; what do you think of it?"

"I can't say that it appeals to me to any great extent," replied Duare. "In the first place I don't like the idea of being killed; in the second place, you couldn't fly the anotar. You might get it off the ground, but you'd be sure to crack up. Of course you'd kill yourself, but that wouldn't compensate for the loss of the anotar."

"You are trying to discourage me," said Vik-yor, "but you can't fool me." It stuck the muzzle of the pistol against the girl's side. "Take the thing down to the ground," it ordered.

Duare was certain that the creature intended to kill her as soon as the anotar landed and then try to fly it itself. The only way in which she might thwart this plan was to keep the anotar in the air.

"I told you to take it down," snapped Vik-yor when it became apparent that

the plane was losing no altitude.

"If I do you'll kill me," said Duare.

"If you don't, I'll kill you," returned Vik-yor. "I have these other things you call controls; I just shoot you and then commence flying it myself. The reason I told you to take me down was so I could let you out, and then practice a little while by myself. Then, if I should find that I do not like it, I would take you in again."

"There will be nothing for me to get into, after you have practiced for a couple of minutes."

"You needn't try to make me change my mind by frightening me," said Vik-yor. "I have made up my mind, and once my mind is made up—"

"Yes," said Duare. "I have noticed that. Very well," she added, "take that pistol out of my ribs and I will take you down."

VIK-YOR replaced the pistol in one of its pocket pouches, and watched every move that Duare made as she brought the anotar to a landing. "Now get out," it said.

"You are headed into the wind," said Duare, "keep going straight ahead, and don't try to climb too fast." Then she stepped to the wing, and dropped to the ground.

Vik-yor opened the throttle wide; and the anotar leaped forward, swerving to the right. Duare held her breath, as the ship bounced and leaped erratically; she gasped as one wing grazed the ground; then the anotar leaped into the air. Duare could hear Vik-yor's screams of terror—they were almost worth the loss of the anotar.

The creature had managed to level off, but the ship was rolling first on one side and then on the other; it described circles; it started into a dive; and then the nose was suddenly jerked up, and it zoomed aloft. Finally it rolled com-

pletely over; and Vik-yor was flying upside down, its screams filling the welkin with horrific noise.

Each moment, Duare expected to see the ship crash; that would not have surprised her; but when Vik-yor completed a half loop and leveled off barely a few feet from the ground, she was surprised. The ship was headed for the river, near which it had taken off. In its terror, the Vooyorgan was clawing at everything on the instrument board, including the ignition switch—and the motor stopped.

The ship sailed gracefully up the river a few feet above the water, until, losing momentum, it pancaked to a safe landing, its pilot hanging half conscious in its safety belt. Duare could scarcely believe that that mad flight had not ended in tragedy, that the anotar was still whole; yet there it was, floating serenely down the river as though it had not just been through as harrowing an experience as may come to a well behaved aeroplane in a life time.

The girl ran to the river bank, praying that the current would bring the anotar to shore—it seemed to be drifting closer in. Finding that it had not been killed, Vik-yor was on the verge of hysterics with relief. It yammered and gibbered with delight.

"Didn't I tell you I could fly it?" it shrieked.

A shift in the current was now drifting the anotar toward the center of the river; soon it would be past Duare. She looked into the deep flowing water. What ravenous monsters might lurk beneath that placid surface! To lose the anotar, was to forfeit her life and Carson's as well. It was that last thought that sent her into the midst of the hidden dangers of the flood. Striking out boldly, she swam strongly toward the anotar. A slimy body brushed against her leg. She expected great

jaws to close up on her next, but nothing happened. She closed in upon the anotar; she seized a pontoon and climbed to the wing; she was safe!

Vik-yor had found her store of nuts, and was devouring them greedily. She did not care; all she cared about was that the anotar was unharmed and that she was aboard it.

CHAPTER XII

Back to the Museum

DUARE started the motor, that she might keep the anotar under control; but she let it continue to drift down the river. Finally she found that for which she was looking—a little island with a patch of backwater at its lower end. She brought the anotar into this quiet water and dropped anchor.

Vik-yor paid no attention to what was going on; it was still gobbling nuts like a famished squirrel. Duare reached for a nut, but Vik-yor struck her hand away and pushed the nuts out of her reach. Duare watched it in amazement; it scarcely hesitated long enough to chew the tough meat of the nuts; it even had to gasp for breath. Soon it commenced to laugh, and then it would stop long enough to sing; only to commence again a moment later.

"Wine!" it cried, "if I only had wine! But there is water." It looked around and saw that the anotar was swinging idly against the shore of a small island. "What are we doing here?" it demanded.

"We are going to remain here overnight," said Duare. "I am tired."

"I am going ashore," said Vik-yor. "You won't go off and leave me; because I have the vial and the pistol." It commenced to laugh and sing, as it gathered up all of the remaining nuts

and carried them ashore; then it lay down on its belly and drank from the river.

It continued to eat and drink until Duare thought that it must burst; and the more it ate and drank, the more hysterical it became. In final and complete ecstasy, it rolled upon the ground, screaming and laughing; then it lay still, panting. It lay there for about fifteen minutes; then it rose slowly to its feet, completely enervated.

It took a few steps toward the anotar, its eyes glassy and staring; it shuddered and fell to the ground, writhing in convulsions; it screamed. "I am dividing!" it cried; "and I can't divide!"

Duare watched it in the throes of its futile contortions until it died.

Duare went ashore and took the vial and the pistol from the thing's pocket pouches; then she weighed anchor and started the motor. The anotar rose like a great bird and circled, while Duare got her bearings. The subdued light of the young night gave good visibility; at midnight it would be darkest, for then the sun would be shining upon the opposite side of the outer cloud envelope, and the refracted light would be at its lowest intensity. By midnight, Duare could be back at Voo-ad.

She set her course toward the north. The great mountain range was upon her left, mysterious and a little frightening in the half light; then came the mighty forest, dark and forbidding. What a different world this was without Carson! Now it was a world filled with loneliness and menace, a gloomy, terrifying world. With him, it would have been just as dark, but it would have been thrilling and interesting.

But now she was flying back to him! Would she find him still alive? Would her bold plan of rescue be crowned with success? The night and the hours held the answers.

ERO SHAN awakened, and looked around. The Museum of Natural History was deserted except for a few sleepy guards and the sad and hopeless array of exhibits.

"Awake, Carson?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "I have slept only fitfully. I cannot rid my mind of the fear that something terrible has happened to Duare. Think of her out there in the night alone with that sub-human creature, and it had the pistol. I heard the guards saying that Vik-yor killed many of its own people with my pistol. It must have taken it from Duare, and it was her only guarantee of safety."

"Don't worry," counselled Ero Shan, "it won't help. Do you believe in the prophetic qualities of dreams?"

"No."

Ero Shan laughed. "Well, neither do I; but I just had a pleasant dream. It may not have been prophetic, but it was cheering. I dreamed that we were all back in Havatoo, and that Nalte was giving a wonderful dinner for us. All the members of the Sanjong were there, and they were heaping praise on Duare."

"I had a dream, too," I said. "I saw the anotar crash, and I saw Duare's broken body lying dead beside it."

"It is well that you don't believe in dreams," said Ero Shan.

"I don't believe in dreams," I almost shouted, "but why did I have to dream such a thing as that!"

A guard came up. It carried a little switch, with which it hit me across the face. "Be quiet!" it snapped; then, from behind the great gantor at my left, came the b-r-r-r of an r-ray pistol; and the guard which had struck me slumped to the floor.

Other guards came running up, as a figure stepped into view from behind the gantor.

"Duare!" I cried.

The guards started for her; but she came on straight toward them, the deadly rays humming from the muzzle of her weapon. As four or five went down, the others turned and fled.

Duare rushed to me, the vial in her hand. Quickly she touched my tongue several times with the stopper; then she turned to minister to Ero Shan. Even before the antidote had taken full effect, she cut us both down.

I felt life returning; I could move my legs, my arms. Warriors were rushing into the building, alarmed by the shouts of the guards. Duare turned to meet them as Ero Shan and I staggered to our feet. Duare only turned to make sure that we could follow her; then she started for the doorway, and Ero Shan and I were at her heels.

THE Vooyorgans went down before those rays of death like wheat before a scythe, and the living turned and ran from the building. Spears were hurled; but fortunately they missed us, and at last we stood in the plaza, where we saw a crowd making for the anotar bent upon destroying it.

"Quick!" cried Duare; "to the anotar!"

It was an invitation that we did not need—we were already half way to it. The Vooyorgans were swarming over the ship by the time we reached it. Whether they had done any irreparable damage or not, we could not tell. They were more determined than I had imagined they would be; but they were a poor match against Ero Shan's sword and mine, and none against the r-ray pistol that Duare handled like a veteran. Soon, those that survived had fled to the safety of the nearest buildings; and we stood in complete command of the situation.

"Give me the vial, Duare," I said.

"What do you want of it?" she asked.

"Those other poor devils in there," I said, nodding toward the museum.

"Yes," she said. "I had intended freeing them, too; but when the creatures put up such resistance, I couldn't take the time, especially with the anotar in danger. But how can you do it? We should not separate, and we don't dare leave the anotar."

"Taxi it right up to the entrance," I said, "so that it blocks it completely. You with the pistol and Ero Shan with his sword can hold that position while I go in and free the exhibits."

It took me a full half hour to free the human beings. They were all warriors, and they all had their arms—and were they hell-bent on revenge! Those that I freed first helped me cut down the others, and by the time we were all through, a couple of hundred well armed warriors were ready to march out into the plaza.

We taxied the anotar from the entrance and let them out. When they found they couldn't come with me, they said good bye and started for the palace of Vik-vik-vik; and as we rose silently above Voo-ad, we heard screams and curses coming from the building.

I asked Duare what had become of Vik-yor. She told me, and then she said, "The poor creature not only could not multiply, but it could not divide."

An hour later Ero Shan pointed back. The sky was red with flames. The warriors I had released had fired Voo-ad.

"They will welcome no more visitors with flowers and song," said Ero Shan.

"And Vik-vik-vik will give no more of his delightful banquets," added Duare.

Into the night and the south we flew, and once again Duare and I were safe and together. Once again we were taking up our search for the city of Sanara, which is in the Empire of Korva in the land of Anlap.

Romance of the Elements---Fluorine

THE EXPERT-STUMPING QUESTION

OF THE 1670'S WAS: "WHAT HAPPENS TO GLASS EATEN AWAY BY THE ACTION OF POWDERED FLUOR-SPAR MIXED WITH OIL OF VITRIOL?"

SCHEELE, 100 YEARS LATER, SOLVED THE MYSTERY; HE LIQUIFIED VOLATILE HYDROFLUORIC ACID PRODUCED BY SULPHURIC ACID

ACTING ON FLUOR-SPAR; SHOWED THAT THE ACID DISSOLVED THE LIME, SODA AND POTASH IN GLASS; THAT

A "GANGSTER" ELEMENT



AN INVISIBLE GAS COMBINED WITH THE SILICON.

CHAMPION "MUSCLE INNER!"

LIKE THE RUTHLESS GANGSTER IT IS, FLUORINE "MUSCLES IN" ON OTHER ELEMENTS! IT SEIZES THE SODIUM FROM SODIUM CHLORIDE, CHASING OUT THE CHLORINE. FLUORINE, MEETING HYDROGEN, EVEN IN THE DARK, COMBINES WITH EXPLOSIVE FORCE. IT TAKES HYDROGEN FROM WATER, LEAVING OXYGEN AS "OZONE". IT COMBINES WITH ALMOST ALL METALS, FORMING FLUORIDES.

SO STRENUOUSLY DID FLUORINE, THE ELEMENT, OBJECT TO ISOLATION THAT SEVERAL WHO TRIED THE TRICK WERE KILLED; OTHERS FORCED TO QUIT BECAUSE OF SERIOUS INJURY. AMONG THOSE TASTING THE AGONIES OF CORROSIVE FLUORINE POISONING WERE DAVY, GAY-LUSSAC, THENARD. ALTHOUGH DAVY FAILED TO ISOLATE FLUORINE, HE ACCURATELY PREDICTED ITS PROPERTIES.

IN 1886, MOISSAN SEPARATED FLUORINE, ELECTROLYTICALLY, FROM A SOLUTION OF ACID POTASSIUM FLUORIDE AND ANHYDROUS HYDROFLUORINE. BUT HE HAD TO USE AN IRIDIUM-PLATINUM "U" TUBE, CAPPED WITH FLUOR-SPAR TO TRAP THE DESPERATE ELEMENT. AND HE ALMOST PERISHED TWICE IN THE ACHIEVEMENT.



SO HARMLESS ARE THE FLUOSILICATES THAT THEY ARE USED ANTISEPTICALLY FOR SURGICAL DRESSINGS; THEY ARE ALSO ADAPTED FOR THE PRESERVING OF FOOD. FLUOR-SPAR IS IMPORTANT TO THE METALLURGICAL INDUSTRY; MODERN AIR CONDITIONING DEVELOPMENTS POINT TO GREATER FLUORINE COMPOUND USE FOR REFRIGERANTS. HYDROFLUORIC ACID IS POPULAR FOR THE ETCHING OF GLASS.

FLUORINE is number 9 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is F and its atomic weight is 19.00. It is a pale, greenish-yellow gas about 1.3 times as heavy as air. It may be condensed to a pale yellow liquid. Its specific gravity is 1.14 (liquid). It occurs in large quantity in cryolite, which is found in Greenland, and in fluorspar. Fluorine does not combine with hydrogen or oxygen.

NEXT MONTH—The Romance of Gallium

EIGHT WHO



NAT SCHACHNER

GENE WESTCOTT tried to laugh at himself, as he stood irresolute on the hillside. It was only a dream, he argued that had brought him out into the night like any superstitious rustic. The whole thing was silly. He'd better get back to bed before he caught cold.

"You're a fool," he said.

Yet he went on, in spite of himself.

The road led upward over windswept meadows that smelled of pine and fragrant grass. A sleepy cow stared at

Eight grim figures had come out of the past!

CAME BACK



They had a plan to remake the Earth, these eight great men. So they came to life again . . .

him and swished her tail. A brown whippoorwill set up its fierce, monotonous clamor from the blackberry tangle.

At the top of the hill Gene paused again. It was his last chance to go back; to return to sanity and a dismissal of his dream as the result of something he had eaten. Doc Lesser would certainly have diagnosed it that way, and laughed at him with the salty chuckle of a man who didn't believe anything that he couldn't measure with his instruments.



The moon was beginning to set behind the wooded plateau to which he had come. To the left was Jared Jones' corn field, odorous with recent plowing. To the right the ground fell away sharply into a ravine. But directly ahead lay the trees—tall, gray-eyed beeches mixed with gaunt hemlocks and clumps of oak. The moonlight swept them with a silver brush and drifted through the undergrowth in broken glitters.

Within the wood Gene knew of a clearing—almost circular, where nothing grew. Not even a stone disturbed the hardpacked earth. Gene had seen it only once, when he had rambled through the hills with Glenda at his side. They had pushed through casually, absorbed in conversation, and had barely given it a passing glance. But these three nights Gene had seen it again, in his dream; so plainly that he could have described every tree, every leaf that rimmed it in.

He hesitated—then the call came again. Stiff legged, Gene walked into the wood.

He came at them suddenly. The moonlight lay in long bands across the clearing. Liquid silver filled it like a bowl. Eight figures stood inside, motionless, waiting.

The white light clothed them in shimmering hues; a frosty mist lifted from the ground and whispered along the insubstantial solidities of their forms. Their faces were silver masks in the waning moon.

"I have come as you demanded," Gene said. "What do you want of me?" He wondered at himself as he spoke. There was fear in him, but not surprise. Perhaps he was still dreaming. In dreams no one is ever surprised by what he sees.

The eight wheeled at his approach. Their burning eyes probed him like keen-tipped lancets. Their countenances

were awful with the majesty of those long dead.

"You have taken your time, youngster," one spoke up suddenly. "We have called you for three nights. You have delayed us with your stubbornness."

GENE looked at the speaker. He was a short, squat man with a stomach that protruded like a rounded pot. Yet he was not ludicrous; the piercing blackness of his deep-sunk eyes, his coarse, high cheekbones and the lank straightness of his hair clothed him with strange dignity. It did not require the pale gesture of a hand thrust deep within an ancient waistcoat to tell Gene who he was.

"Speak up, lad," Napoleon repeated in a tone of irritation. "We have work to do and the time is short."

Gene took a deep breath. He felt cold all over, though the night was warm.

"I did not come at first, because I did not believe the vision," he said as steadily as he could.

A figure who stood a little apart stirred. He too was short, and his face was lined with ugliness. His tipped, broad-flaring nostrils, his shaggy brows and thick, protruding lips gave him the appearance of a goatish satyr. Yet when he smiled, his aspect took on an aspect of nobility.

"You are a sceptic, my son," he nodded approvingly. "It is the first step on the path to truth."

"We are not here to quibble about the sophistry of words, Socrates," laughed a bald-headed man with hawk-like features and arrogant eyes. "Let us leave that to Greek slaves and the philosophers. The mists of time have yielded us up for a purpose. Let us cross our Rubicon now, and seize the chance that offers us."

He moved toward Gene, but a ruddy-featured man with a pointed, reddish beard got quietly in his way. Silken hose and plum-colored breeches encased his limbs, and the huge ruff that rimmed his head was immaculately starched.

"Hold, Julius Caesar!" he commanded. "You men of action are forever too abrupt. That was why you gushed out your life-blood with a score of daggers plucking at your flesh. We have strutted once on the sounding stage of this puny earth. Do we really wish to return and repeat the comedy that has already been acted? Let us consider—"

"Bah!" a young man clad in bronze armor and with the classic features of a Greek statue interrupted scornfully. "What does a barbarian poet from a foggy little island on the rim of the world know about such matters? In my time I conquered all possible worlds. Now there are new ones that unfold. Argue your womanish verse with Socrates, if you like, friend Shakespeare; but let those who are men and trust to their swords proceed with action."

"Hear! Hear!" clamored a huge-thewed man with careless, open face and a shock of leonine, yellow hair. "Alexander is right. To the devil with words! When do we start?"

They swayed toward Gene—incredible figures from an incredible past. He stared from one to the other of the crowding wraiths, clenching his hands with desperate tension. He recognized them all—those who had spoken and those who had not. Shadows of those who had rocked the earth with their tread—four who had drenched the nations with the blood of their conquests—Alexander the Great, arrogant Caesar, subtly planning Napoleon, and he who had spoken last, huge of body and simple of mind—Richard the Lion-Hearted.

Four others stood with them—four who had moved the earth with the power of thought and the force of words—squat-faced Socrates, Shakespeare of the mighty line; next him a little mockery of a man, pinching snuff with fastidious gesture and raising Voltairean eyebrows; and, a little to one side, a tall, grave, somber man with trim, brown beard and soberer ruff than Shakespeare—Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam.

GENE WESTCOTT faced them boldly. If they were but the in-substantial fabric of his own mind, they must soon vanish and leave him comfortably asleep in bed; if they were not—and every fiber in his being cried out that they were not—then he must act the man in their mighty presence.

"You have called, and I have come," he told them steadily. "But not because I wished it. You have no right to be on earth; your bones have long since turned to dust."

Shakespeare grinned.

"I see you have read my plays," he observed. "That particular line was a poor one, and had to do with friend Caesar. In fact, the only reason that Sir Francis persuaded me to return with him was the prospect of writing new plays that are worthier of my genius." His smile darkened. "I had ample time to con them whole in the vastnesses from which we come."

Gene said:

"You are dead! It is not possible for you to return. The laws of the universe forbid it."

Voltaire took another pinch of snuff.

"It is true we are dead," he admitted in a dry, matter-of-fact tone. "But in another sense we are still alive. Our spirits loved this earth too much ever to be quit of it. The bodies have moldered, but the essence of us remained—

pure thought, pure will, pure brute power, if you wish," he added with a disdainful glance at the great, blond head of Richard Coeur-de-Lion. "As long as there are men who remember us on earth, we wander on, a company of those who dared in the past and are ready to dare again if the opportunity should arise."

"You mean," Gene whispered, afraid, "the opportunity has come?"

The weazened little man nodded.

"Yes. We have found a method of returning to the world of men. We are tired of being wanderers in the waste-lands of infinity." He grimaced. "It is not pleasant out there."

"Voltaire was always too earthy to be happy out there," interposed Socrates, screwing up his goat-like face. "So were the men of arms. I however was content; and would have remained so if only the ideas of truth and beauty had marched on in this world of yours. But you have gone astray. Brute emotions have taken the place of luminous reason; morbid cruelties the clean sway of sanity. The Greek ideal of a sound mind in a sound body no longer holds. Madmen rule and philosophers languish in concentration camps. It is time to call a halt."

Napoleon grunted.

"It is time to march," he corrected. "Perfidious Albion and the Prussian beast think to betray my beloved France. I shall put an end to that."

Gene felt himself shivering. If these eight phantoms were real, then incalculable things were in the cards. They spoke of changing the world to fit their hearts' desires. But already they quarreled; their aims were wholly divergent. What terrible catastrophes might result, once they were loosed upon the living?

Four were soldiers, and spoke of bloody conquests. Good Lord, there

was enough of that on earth today! Four were men of thought and intellect. Yet each age must build its own philosophies and systems of life. Gene, who observed the race of man with a sharpened eye and dissected them with merciless precision for the benefit of crowded theaters, knew that. To force the system of an alien age upon the present must lead only to disaster, no matter how well-intentioned and large-souled the promulgators might be. Then a shaft of hope pierced his breast.

"**H**OW," he asked craftily, "can you return? You are not alive, in spite of these ancient forms of yours you have somehow managed to reassume. After all, you are only dreams, mere memories."

"True!" Shakespeare chuckled, wagging his trim, pointed beard. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of; the insubstantial fabric of the mind. But Sir Francis Bacon—whom silly folk have credited with my lines* has found a way. I do not pretend to know the manner of it—I am but a poet, not a wonder-maker. He claims that the subtleties of our immortal thought and will may, by appropriate measures, penetrate gross interstices of mortal flesh and, clad in the lusty habiliments of living creatures, direct them to our will."

Bacon smiled somberly.

"Will Shakespeare," he observed, "is not content with pithy speech. He speaks in phrases beyond all compass. The matter is simple. The atoms of our being are infinitely subtle. The corpo-

* Many historians and students of Shakespeare's works have contended that it was his contemporary, Sir Francis Bacon, who really wrote the famous plays. But this opinion has been discredited, and it is generally acknowledged, that although Bacon did write several things, he never wrote a play. He was the world's most prolific scientist, outside of Leonardo Da Vinci, and interested in the most varied of subjects.—Ed.

real spaces of your fleshly bodies are gross in comparison. By proper means, discovered in the centuries I have pondered the problem, we can interpenetrate your forms, take possession of your earthly minds, and in your shape remake the world."

For a moment Gene stood stiff and silent. Then he forced himself to ask the question he dreaded above all others.

"Where," he demanded, "are you going to obtain your sheathing bodies? Whose individualities are to be dispossessed?"

Richard of England thrust back his shaggy mane and roared with bull-throated laughter.

"You for one, and the good people of that thriving town which nestles yonder in the hills. They seem of sturdy, muscular stock, and of a fair mien." His blue eyes narrowed speculatively on Gene. "Forsooth, you look a likely lad. Clean of limb and well-thewed, withal." His glance challenged the others. "I lay claim to him; do you hear?"

Alexander flung forward, his brow black with anger.

"By Zeus, you barbarian Northerners take much upon yourselves. He is mine; I spoke for him first."

"Nay!" said Shakespeare. "His mind is too subtle and complicated to house your venturesome spirits. The lad is a fellow-craftsman, though much degenerated from the vastly days. His matter limps prosily and his manner is inept. Nathless I claim him for the poor thing that he is."

Napoleon's eyes shot flames.

"I was an Emperor with millions at my slightest beck. Who else in all this company has better right to make a choice?"

Uproar followed. Voices rose angrily. Faces distorted; they shook fists

at each other. Voltaire stepped nimbly aside; his sharp, satiric features mocking them all.

"You had better go, young man," he advised, "before they come to their incorporeal senses, and seek to invade you in a body. Myself, I seek no male exterior. I would prefer—strictly as an experiment, you understand—the dainty lineaments of a maid of one-and-twenty. It should prove a most delectable sensation."

Sound advice, thought Gene, and put thought into action. He jerked quickly back into the woods, sped through underbrush and leafy lanes back to the upland pastures; raced down the long slope with sobbing, panting breath.

The moon had sunk beneath the upper rim; the stars made the stony hills into shadowed humps. The noise of quarreling shapes died suddenly, swallowed up in the echoes of his own flight. The cool dawn-breeze fanned his fevered cheeks, pumped air into his gasping lungs. He slackened his head-long pace; tried to grip his whirling senses. He flung a fearful look back over his shoulder.

There was nothing; nothing but the solemn hill and the capping woods. No sign of the incredible array that had called him from his sleep; no sign that they had ever existed. Down beneath, in the valley, the lights gleamed placidly. Nothing else showed. Stonehill was still asleep.

But that backward look was his undoing. He sprawled and went headlong over a jagged rock. His head jarred with a sickening thud. Sparks blazed suddenly; were swallowed up in bottomless gray.

WARMTH clad his motionless form with its healing power; a great twittering of birds penetrated his senses. He stirred, opened lead-heavy eyes.

Awareness flowed slowly into him. He sat up with a groan, stared incredulously about him. His limbs were cramped and his head ached. His clothes were drenched with the night-dew.

The sun was already high in the heavens, and the mist was lifting over the top of the plateau. Cow bells tinkled in the distance: a cloud of dust rolled rapidly along the highway beneath. A steady clanking came from the lumber mill; the nine-forty from Boston hooted along the rails. The chapel bell of the College clanged class-change. Stonehill stirred with its daily life; while he—

Gene blinked; swore deeply yet softly. This was the first time he had ever walked in his sleep. He felt his head. There was a sizeable lump on his forehead. The dream was still vivid upon him; but its edges were blurred. Now, in the clear light of the sun, he recognized it for what it was—an extraordinary nightmare induced by the cold lobster and ham he had snatched from the refrigerator on his late return from the city. Pressure on the nerves that surrounded the stomach, he could hear Doc Lesser saying with a wise shake of his head, transmitted to the delicate fabric of the brain and giving rise to the damndest things.

Ruefully Gene brushed the beaded moisture from his clothes and stumbled stiffly down the hill. His vision certainly classed among the damndest things!

Yet an uneasy feeling persisted as he swung along the chief business street of the little town. He kept to the shadowed side, hugging the trees, watching with half-fearful eyes every one who passed. Thank God they all seemed normal, going leisurely about their daily affairs. Josh Wiley, his lank body bent almost double over the broom, gave a last deft sweep to send the accumulated cigarette butts whirling into the gutter,

spat reflectively after them, and turned back into the store. Miss Lucy Hawley fluttered down the street, market basket dangling from her thin elbow.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, as long as Gene could remember, Miss Lucy opened the front door of their cavernous house on the dot of ten; on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays Miss Kate did the same. On Sundays both rested.

An ancient Ford chugged loudly along. Doc Lesser leaned out, waved his hand in greeting to Gene, and rattled on. His jovial, rubicund face had not changed in the slightest. Everything was familiar; everything moved according to the unalterable habits of Stonehill.

Something nightmarish lifted from Gene's chest. In spite of his rationalizations, a strange fear had lurked in the odd corners of his being. Suppose he had actually seen those mighty apparitions! But now he was positive. He had eaten in haste and late at night. He had walked in his sleep along the hillside and had smacked his head into unconsciousness. That was all!

HE turned a corner into a quiet back street, and found his house half-hidden among broad-leaved maples. He went up the porch on tiptoe, seeking stealthy entrance. But as he pushed the door open, Mrs. Burdock confronted him, dust cloth in hand, disapproval written all over her angular face.

"Good Heavens, Mr. Westcott," she pursed her lips angrily, "but you gave me a turn. Here I waited and waited with your breakfast, but you never came down. I knocked a couple of times, but there was no answer. Finally I got scared and peeked in; and there you were gone, your bed rumpled and the sheets half on the floor. Where've you been?"

Gene tried to edge past his housekeeper. She had been with him for five years, ever since he had moved to this little New England town to seek the peace and quiet he required for his writing. The drama was a severe mistress; but not as severe as Mrs. Burdock. Spare, angular, unlovely, she watched over his habits with an eagle eye.

"Couldn't sleep," he muttered. "Went out for a long walk."

"Ohh!" she gasped. "Look at your clothes; they're a sight. And your head!"

"Fell into a swamp," he said hastily, and escaped to his room. He bathed, shaved and changed to fresh clothes. The lump on his head was going down; he felt better; and the vision of the preceding night seemed infinitely remote. He'd have to watch his diet from now on. Perhaps a little session with Doc Lesser would help.

His typewriter stared at him accusingly. Down in New York Sam Harrow was putting on his latest show. It was scheduled to open in a week; but there were some last minute changes to be made in the lines. He had driven down yesterday to see the rehearsal, and had driven back the same day. It had been a grueling four-hundred-mile trip. That too had helped bring on his last and worst nightmare.

After a breakfast of orange juice, bacon and eggs, marmalade and coffee, he shooed the head-shaking Mrs. Burdock out of the room, and sat down before the typewriter. But the blank paper he inserted into the roller was no blander than his thoughts. His fingers poised above the keys; and stayed that way.

After half an hour, he said with deep feeling:

"Damn!"

Then he got up. He was still too jit-

tery, he told himself. Which was quite natural, considering that he had walked in his sleep, and had lain out on the hillside the greater part of the night, unconscious. His brain needed clearing. Perhaps another walk might do the trick.

Yet even as he slipped out the back way, to avoid his faithful housekeeper's accusing glance, he knew exactly where he was going. He was going to walk along the road to Glenda Gordon's. He wanted to see her. Now this was not an unusual desire on his part, but he ordinarily managed to suppress it during working hours. This was different. The queer feeling, a hangover from his strange nocturnal experience, persisted in the back of his head. He would not rest easy until he had seen Glenda.

TEN minutes later he was knocking at the door of Glenda's cottage. It seemed to him that his heart was knocking quite as loudly. He had been in a measure responsible for her coming to Stonehill. She was a rather important artist—at twenty-two her water-colors hung prominently in museums and private collections, and the Whitney Museum had given her the final eclat of a one-man (or one-girl, to be exact) show. She had designed the settings for Gene's last play, and they had become intimate. She came out one week-end to visit him at Stonehill, fell in love with the little New England town and its college campus; and promptly rented a house in which to paint.

He knocked again. The vacant echoes disturbed him. Why was there no answer? Then he heard someone shuffling inside, and the door flung open. Mrs. Crane, plump and motherly, peered out. She looked scared.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Westcott!" she gasped. "I—I thought—"

"Where's Glenda?"

The scared look deepened.

"I don't know, sir. She slipped out of the house about six this morning, just as I was getting up to start the stove going. She had a queer, set look about her. It was like a mocking grin that had frozen into place. I ain't never seen her like that before. I called after her, but she didn't seem to hear me. She just went on down to the brook at a right smart clip, and disappeared among the willows there. She ain't been back." The housekeeper began to whimper. "You—you don't think anything happened to her?"

Something stiffened and went cold inside of Gene. The jangling bells of his own experience beat disordered tunes in his head. Yet he said with an effort at casualness:

"Nonsense! She must have gone for a long walk. Very likely she's hunting a scene for her next landscape. She'll be back all right."

Mrs. Crane wiped her eyes with her apron.

"She ain't never been away so long. And if you had seen that look on her face—"

But Gene was already gone. The memory of Voltaire's phantom rose to torture him. What had that spirit of mockery avowed? A preference for the dainty lineaments of a maid of one-and-twenty. Gene groaned and broke into a run. Suppose it had not been a mere nightmare, induced by an inner upset! Suppose, in spite of reason, in spite of science, the dead *had* found a way to return!

He crossed the brook by the rickety wooden bridge, raced through the willows and up the fields that stretched beyond.

"Glenda!" he called again and again. "Where are you?"

But only the crickets answered him with senseless chirrupings; and a cat-

bird mimicked his call. He flung himself up the hill, fighting back the terror that assailed him. This was the twentieth century; not the sixteenth. The departed great of former ages could never return. They were dead; science proclaimed the irrevocability of their departure; religion itself made no provision for their return to earth.

YET the fear that gripped him increased as he cut across the pastures to the top of the hill. He did not know what he would find; he did not stop to think of the danger to himself. With what weapons could one fight those who were already dead? Only one thought hammered in his skull. He must find Glenda! He crashed into the little clearing, breathing heavily.

It was bare! There was no sign of the girl or of the life-like phantoms who had peopled it the night before. A wild hope flashed through him. Then it had been in fact a dream. The hope flared—and died. There, on the ground, lay a sodden handkerchief. He picked it up. It bore his monogram. He *had* been here. It was all true!

He turned and started down the hill again. He did not know that he was running; that his feet had stumbled unawares on the dirt road that wound over the hills. Something rattled and coughed behind him; it caught up to him in a whirlwind of dust.

"Hey!" shouted Doc Lesser's familiar voice. "Where're you running like that, you young idiot? Hop in and I'll get you into town in jig time."

Gene stopped short with a sob of relief. Doc Lesser's genial ruddiness, wagging goatee and twinkling blue eyes under a frosty patch of hair were like balm to his soul. *Here* was sanity; here was a man who could help.

He flung on the running board, climbed into the bumping seat.

"Thank God I met you, Doc," he said. "I—"

The doctor did not hear him. The rattletrap car was making plenty of noise on the rutted road.

"Just came down from Sabrina Jones," he yelled above the racket. "She got herself a nice, healthy boy. Hardly needed me at all." He chuckled. "I just sorta put my okay on it, that's all."

Gene gripped his shoulder so that the car almost plunged into a ditch.

"Listen, Doc," he said grimly. "I know you'll think I'm crazy; but I've seen eight dead men face to face—Socrates, Caesar, Shakespeare, Napoleon, Alexander and Voltaire, Richard of England and Bacon. Eight of the greatest men of all time. They've got Glenda and they're after seven more. Then they're going to conquer the world."

Doc Lesser braked the car to a slithering halt and shut off the ignition. Then he turned warily toward Gene. His genial blue eyes were deep with concern.

"Now look, Gene," he said soothingly. "You writer chaps sit on your rear-ends too much. You get notions. It's all right putting them into books for other nitwits to read; but it's darn dangerous going around and—"

"Im *not* suffering from a nervous breakdown," retorted Gene, "if that's what you're getting at. I wish to God I were! I tell you I've *seen* them. I know it's incredible; I know it's easier to call me crazy. But if you'll listen—"

Doc Lesser was a keen judge of men and a sportsman. He listened. Nor did he interrupt. Nor did he argue when Gene had finished.

All he said was:

"Hmm! We've got to find Glenda. A bunch like that sounds dangerous."

Gene gestured despairingly.

"That means you don't believe a

word I say. You think I ran into some gang—all dressed up to scare the pants off suckers like myself."

"Well—" Lesser surveyed him with a bright smile.

"Isn't that a more reasonable theory?"

"Start the car," Gene said. "We're going into town."

THE two men sat in silence as they bumped along. There was nothing more they could say to each other. But Gene was conscious of Doc Lesser's sidelong glances.

They were nearing the town. The lumber mill thrust its sprawling bulk along the stream, getting its power from the swift current. About fifty men tended its whirling saws and stacked the cut boards in gigantic piles.

"Hello!" the doctor said suddenly. "There's Tim Foley. His wife's been ailing some this past week. Mind if I stop and find out how she is?"

Gene grinned tightly. He knew what was in Lesser's mind. He was scared of him and his hallucinations. He wanted Foley's help.

Tim Foley stood at the side of the road, watching their approach. He was mill foreman, and a giant of a man, with flame-red hair and pale blue eyes that glowed with battle lust on Saturday nights when he had a few drinks tucked under his belt. Otherwise he was good-natured enough, and ruled his burly crew as much with his merry tongue as with his fists.

"Must be twelve!" Gene thought. "The mill isn't working."

Lesser pulled alongside.

"Hi there, Tim!" he greeted the foreman. There was relief in his voice. "How's the missus feeling?"

The foreman did not answer at first. Slowly he pulled his gaze down from somewhere over their heads. There

was a cold, arrogant look in his eyes. Gene turned rigid. Where, and on whom, had he recently seen just such a glance?

Tim Foley ordinarily spoke with a comfortable brogue, but there was no sign of it now. His English had broadened; the consonants were slurred and the vowels stressed; even those that in modern speech were considered silent. There was a strange turn of phrase and lilt of tone that brought Gene sharply forward in his seat.

"You are an impudent knave," said Tim. "You would do well to curb your tongue in humbleness when you address me." He studied the aghast doctor a moment with cold scorn. Then he turned and swaggered arrogantly back to the silent mill.

"We-e-ell, I'll be damned!" Lesser ejaculated. "What's got into Tim?" Then his jovial face hardened and he fumbled for the latch. "If that crazy Irish galoot think's he's putting something over on me—"

Gene gripped him by the collar.

"Start the car, Doc," he whispered fiercely, "and let's get the hell away from here fast."

Lesser had forgotten about Gene's strange hallucination.

"Let me go!" he snorted. "Tim's just trying to be funny; but after I get through with him—"

"You fool!" groaned Gene. "That isn't Tim any more. That's Richard the First of England. They've started already. We're too late."

"Eh, what's that?" The doctor stopped his struggles, stared at Gene with slack mouth. "You're crazy!" But his hand trembled as it sought the ignition key. The car snapped into motion and went snarling down the road.

"I'm getting you to bed first with a good sedative," he mumbled. "Then

I'll come back to talk to that hulking lumoxox—"

THE main street was strangely deserted. The normal number of midday cars were parked at right angles to the curb. But no one lounged on the flagstoned walks; the grain and feed store of Walt Carey, usually buzzing with the talk of a dozen farmers, was dark and empty. Tony's Diner swung agape in the breeze, vacant of laughter and the odorous tang of frying hamburgers; even the usual complement of prowling cats and lazy, ear-twitching dogs had vanished.

"Where the hell's everybody?" demanded Lesser. The piston-explosions of the Ford echoed down the empty street. The sweat beaded on his forehead; the knuckles on the steering wheel were white with strain. "Ah, there's Josh Wiley. I'll bank on his normality. He's too dumb to go hay-wire like you highstrung chaps. Hi, Josh!"

The storekeeper was coming purposefully down the wooden steps of his establishment. His slouching lankness was a little more erect than ordinary on bony forehead. He stopped short at the hail, then came slowly over to the curb where Doc Lesser had swung his car.

He disregarded Lesser. He stared at Gene with curiously penetrative eyes. He seemed strangely transfigured. There was authority in his bearing; a leaping intelligence in the bony contours of his face.

"Young man," he greeted, "you eluded us once, much to the hurt of gentle Will, who thought he found in you a fellow fashioner of idle plays. I place no such store on the outward form. It is but a machine to be used as we may direct. But since friend Shakespeare still seeks the fleshly ten-

ement of your body—”

This time Doc Lesser required no prompting. The ancient car catapulted forward with a jerk that almost ripped the engine apart.

“That,” husked Gene, “was Sir Francis Bacon. He found the way to lead them back to earth. Now do you believe?”

“Crazy! Crazy as loons, all of you!” But there was no conviction in Lesser’s voice. His ruddy cheeks were pale as though he had seen a ghost.

The short hairs at the nape of Gene’s neck began to bristle. His flesh ridged and became hard. A little breeze stirred across his body. He was shivering violently.

“Stop the car, Doc,” he chattered. “There’s some one in here with us.”

Lesser jammed on the brakes. “Now look here,” he started angrily. “This nonsense has gone far enough. Get out of here and—”

The breeze became a wind; it whirled and coagulated into formless darkness.

Gene struck out desperately with his fists. He heard Lesser’s grunt of pain. The palpable mist folded around him. Something was seeking entrance. Muscles corded, lungs exploding with withheld breath, he fought back against the unseen presence. The blackness thickened.

“Good Lord, Gene!” Lesser cried. “What’s happened?” Then he gave a grunt and was still.

Gene’s knuckles cracked sharply against the windshield. He gritted his teeth with a sob and shoved every ounce of his will into the battle against the clinging mist.

“No! No!” his mind shrieked its negation. His pores oozed sweat with the fury of the invisible conflict; every muscle strained in repulsion against the invader.

SUDDENLY the weight was lifted. The strange shadow-stuff seemed to ebb away from him. Darkness gave way to sunlight. The narrow confines of the Ford, the long, deserted street, the line of stores and garages, recovered recognizable outlines. Gene’s breath exhaled in a shuddering sob. He sank limply back into the seat. His body had no strength; his mind was drained of all reserves. But a queer exultation upheld him. He had won! He had repelled the questing spirit of the mighty Shakespeare himself. He had kept his integrity in the face of the strangest invasion ever attempted against mortal man. And since he had succeeded, that meant that the eight who had returned were not as powerful as he had feared. In that case—

The Ford was going again. In the overwhelming absorption of his struggle he had not felt the initial jerk. Weak and still shaken, he turned to his companion.

“You sure kept your head, Doc,” he said approvingly. “I thought you’d be scared to death. Let’s get out of Stonehill as fast as we can. After what just happened—”

Lesser’s face seemed curiously in a shadow. His little goatee had stopped its usual wagging. He began to chuckle, melodiously, softly.

Gene peered at him quickly. Something was wrong. That was not the genial Doc’s ordinary laughter. If, in fact, there was anything to laugh at just now.

“Now, lad,” said the man at the wheel, swinging into College Boulevard that led to the broad campus of Stonehill College, “don’t thee bother thy weary pate about the destination of this monstrous chariot. As for fear, the ruddy particles that once were wont to visit my heart had never known the meaning of that term.”

"Have you gone crazy, Doc?" Gene demanded. "Or is it a joke? If it is, this is no time for it. The world's about to go to pot, and you spout a wretched combination of what you think is Elizabethan English and an Irish brogue that Tim himself would have been ashamed of. Snap out of it and get back on the main highway again. We've got to seek help."

Lesser jerked around angrily. The car almost climbed up the curb as he did.

"Careful, lad, with your tongue," he warned. "How dare you compare the purity of my English speech with the thick jargon of Irish trotters of the bogs? I had been unduly courteous with you, though the harsh, clipped syllables to which you have perverted our noble tongue has ere this offended mine ear. Peace, and you would not offend me to your own hurt."

Hot retort was on Gene's tongue, and died into a little gurgle of sound. He had seen Lesser full-face, and he had remembered something. The jovial doctor's features were subtly changed. His grizzled beard had a tinge of redder color. The contours of his cheeks had shaped themselves into a narrower mold. His eyes gleamed half with anger, half with speculative amusement. And Gene remembered. Back in college a lecturer on the Elizabethan age had told them: the lines of Shakespeare, delivered at the Globe, would sound to modern ears like a travesty of the speech of County Cork.

Shakespeare!

GENE shrank away with a startled gasp. His hand reached behind him for the lever that opened the door. A sudden twist, and he would catapult from the speeding Ford to the road. He'd rather take his chance on a lamed foot or a broken arm than remain a

captive to this thing of dread who had taken on poor Lesser's physical body.

"Stay where you are," said Shakespeare quietly.

Gene's fingers froze on the lever. They seemed paralyzed into inaction. He could not move a single muscle.

"That is better, my young friend," Shakespeare approved with a soft chuckle. "I would not do you hurt wittingly. For, after all, you too have fashioned from the vasty depths the forms of human beings all compact, and strutted them across the well-lit stage for fools to gape at. I would not say you have done it properly, but then that is the fault of your age, not yours. The dull ears of the groundlings must be tickled with duller prose; they would not understand the surge and thunder of my verse, nor the sweep of Kit Marlowe's mighty line. Poor Kit! I never found him in my spacious wanderings. He owed me a stoop of sack on a wager I had won. There was a certain wench—"

"What are you going to do with me?" Gene asked, prying his stiffened lips open with a desperate effort.

Shakespeare looked at him and laughed.

"Nothing, lad," he answered in kindly fashion. "I said I liked you. I had thought to clothe my incorporeal spirit in your lithe flesh, but then I saw the ruddy features and wagging beard of the man of medicine." He stroked the pointed beard with much satisfaction. "I had been lost without this silken texture on my face. I find the juices of my mind flow more freely when I caress it with gentle fingers."

"Then let me go."

"Nay, lad, that I cannot. You have seen our company entire; you know us in the parts we have adopted to strut the stage of this your life. Until our plans are fully laid, you must go along

with us. You shall not suffer, that I warrant you."

The Ford lurched into the shade-bordered street where the faculty houses stood in a modest row. Shakespeare screwed up his face.

"How stop you this earth-shaking steed, lad? It goeth of itself, with much muttering, but it doth not cease when I command."

Gene reached over, turned off the ignition, pulled the hand brake. The car groaned to a jerking halt in front of the house of Dr. George Alsop, who taught philosophy at Stonehill. Shakespeare breathed a sigh of relief.

"I leave these iron monsters to Sir Francis, who hath a way with them. Hereafter I ride only the good steed Pegasus." He leaped from the car, beckoned to Gene. "Come!"

Something tugged at Gene's mind and also at the muscles of his body. Without volition of his own he followed the bard of Avon into the neat little frame house in which George Alsop lived a bachelor life.

Inside the living room two figures rose. A dry voice greeted them. "It is time you came, Will. But where is Sir Francis? I expected a little woolgathering from a romantic poet; but not from one who pretends to be a scientist."

"Glenda!" Gene cried out terribly, and leaped toward the girl who had just spoken with the dry, sharp voice of Voltaire.

SOMETHING seemed to stop him in midrush, and bring his quivering body to an abrupt halt. Glenda Gordon looked at him quizzically. She was a slim wisp of a girl, with curly brown hair and glinting gray eyes. Her features had been subtly curved and mobile; but now something strange informed them, and brought ironic intel-

ligence to her eyes and a sharp, caustic expression of disdainful mockery to her lips.

She shook her head.

"Behold, it is the young man again who came to us on the hill. He refuses to stay out of our path. Can it be he affects the tender passion for the young lady whose form I have taken?"

The other figure moved into the light. George Alsop was a big, placid man with sandy eyebrows and a rather baldish head. His clothes were always baggy, and his tie invariably askew. He too had changed. His face had broadened slightly, his nostrils tilted with an inquiring gesture, and a strange, transfigured ugliness gave him a goatish appearance. Even such had Socrates shown the night before on the hilltop.

"It is Shakespeare's fault, and the fault of the romantic poets of his trade," he murmured. "After all, what is love between man and woman? A subordinate urge for procreation that has nothing to do with the mind, or with the great inquiries of philosophy. But the silly poets have glorified it—"

"Spare me your preachments, my Socrates," Shakespeare interrupted. "Meseems my poet's frenzy is more practical than your eternal prating after truth. While we stand here and dally with words, I doubt not that our warrior friends are even now in motion."

"The warriors think always with their feet," grinned Voltaire. "They march, while we but talk. But somehow, our idle words get wings and speed before to win the victory. Now if the venerable Bacon were come—"

Socrates turned to the door.

"This time the poet is right and the sceptic has erred. Look down that tree-shaded vista. Here come the men of blood and iron with recruits whom they gathered on the way."

Somehow Gene managed to turn his

head. Slowly the use of his limbs was returning. And with it, came despair and a strange helplessness. Glenda stood before him in the flesh, but she was a stranger. So was Alsop; so were these other men whom he had known these past five years.

And now, coming down the street, marching with soldierly tread, was a solid phalanx.

IN THE forefront were four men. Tim Foley transformed into Richard the Lion-Hearted, Rufe Greene, the good-looking young clerk in Henkel's drug store, metamorphized into the godlike Alexander. Harvey Wiggs, the lawyer, whom the judges of the County Court held contemptuous of their dignity, and subtly changed his cynical arrogance into the very mold of Julius Caesar. And a little to one side, half aloof from the others, strode a little, fat-bellied man. Lucius Halliday taught mathematics in the high school, but his passion was chess. He played it as a general plans his campaign. Every pawn was a regiment sent into battle; every castle was a fortress well-taken. No wonder that Napoleon Bonaparte found congenial entrance into his body.

Behind them came men of Stonehill, moving in grim silence, faces blank with outward compulsion. The hulking mill crew; brawny farmers and workers from the factory. Simple, sturdy folk whom Gene had known for years; solid New Englanders whose speech was chary and who believed only what they saw and not much of that.

Shakespeare frowned.

"They have stolen a march. But no matter, when Sir Francis comes, we shall gain our own cohorts."

A long, lank figure moved around the corner of the house, swung his bony legs up the porch.

"I hear my name," said Josh Wiley.

"I was only a little delayed."

"A man of science should not suffer delay," Voltaire retorted. "Does the sun delay in the sky; or earth in its diurnal rotation?"

The marching men came to a halt in front of Alsop's house. The four in front wheeled and came directly up the path, and through the open door into room. The troop that had followed stood in the street, at attention, immovable, with expressionless faces.

Socrates met them with gentle reproof.

"This was not in our plan. Was it not agreed that we should first take counsel after we clothed ourselves in earthly bodies?"

Richard thrust back his red-thatched head and roared.

"Counsel? Talk is for women. A man strikes first, and thinks, if think he must, when he is old and full of rheums."

Julius Caesar smiled a superior grin.

"Richard of England puts it a bit baldly. I have ever found that a sudden march is worth ten deliberations in a tent."

"Had I listened to such as you, Socrates," cried Alexander, "I would have remained in Macedonia and died a petty king."

Napoleon turned his dark, inscrutable eyes upon his fellows. A strange smile wove over his dark features; but he said nothing. To Gene, sick with a feeling of utter impotence in their presence, seemingly unnoticed by the rest, it appeared that this sudden foray by the four generals was not a rash impulse, but a crafty, carefully considered piece of strategy on Napoleon's part.

Something snapped in him. Perhaps it was their inattention that released him partly from their grip; perhaps it was the impact of his straining will.

"NOW look here," he interposed suddenly, with bold determination. "You do not know what you are about. You are trying to conquer a world that belongs to the living, simply because you are tired of the infinity in which your restless spirits have wandered. But that is impossible. You are flying in the face of natural laws. It is true that you have managed to dispossess the living from the bodies you have seized; you may even succeed temporarily in your mad scheme. But sooner or later the immutable laws of the universe will defeat you. Don't you understand? You have died in obedience to an inexorable plan. You did your work, and yielded up your places to others. You cannot return."

He turned to the form of Glenda with an appealing gesture. Perhaps her spirit, submerged under the acid mockery of Voltaire, might rise to his plea and cast out the invader.

But the girl only nodded approvingly. "An excellent analysis," she replied, "even though the premises are false. Our four friends, the men of arms, naturally would not understand. They never were very good on logic. But those on the intellectual side, I doubt not, have followed your statement closely. Nevertheless, as I have said, your premises are false. There are no such immutable laws as you suppose. I had my doubts about them in life; after my wanderings in the interstices of time and space, my doubts became convictions.

"There are no laws that the power of disembodied thought cannot amend. Ideas, as Socrates will tell you, are the only immortality. All else is pure illusion and show. The living are but the molds of our former thoughts. You are responsive to our influence; we shaped the courses your lives must follow. Isn't that your modern doctrine of heredity?"

"Yes, but—" Gene stared. She waved a slender hand.

"Don't interrupt, young man," she said with quiet laughter. "That was but a rhetorical question, requiring no answer. As long as you followed our paths, I at least was content in my limbo. I never thought to interfere, nor did my friends; though I confess Alexander was always moaning about the new worlds he had failed to conquer in life, simply because he had not known of their existence.

"But now, your world of living has cut loose from the past. Madness has taken the place of reason; vicious cruelty has supplanted kindness, hate tolerance, and bestial passions the loftiness of the soul. It is time to call a halt. If we do not intervene, earth will perish in a sputter of flame and horror; mankind will be wiped clean."

"That is true," Shakespeare agreed. "Yet there is a more selfish reason for our conduct. We stay on only long as our thoughts, our ideas, inhere in the hearts and memories of the living. Once those memories are erased, once there are no longer men and women to cherish them in their bosoms, we vanish into echoing nothingness."

"There are many such," Bacon said somberly. "I saw them drift into smoke in that void from which we came. Brains as mighty as any of us; men of Ur and Chaldee and of Knossos. You no longer remember them; and they went." Then his dark eyes flashed. "But that didn't matter. I never cared much for personal immortality. It was the race that mattered. Once I wrote a little thing I called *Atlantis*. I thought to shadow forth the future of this earth. I find I was mistaken. So I have returned to set the times aright."

RICHARD started up. "Words!" he shouted wrathful-

ly. "All words! A buffet on the head is worth a million of them. Why don't we start?"

"Stick to your buffets then, and do not talk," Napoleon said dryly. "We'll call on you fast enough when they are needed. I told you *I* would plan our strategy." His sunken eyes stared at the others. "Four of us are soldiers; four are men of thought. Now mind you, I have a high regard for ideas—when they are linked with action. But too often the processes of thought cripple action." He clapped Shakespeare in friendly fashion on the back. "I think you once remarked on that in a play called—let me see—what was its name?"

"Hamlet," said Shakespeare, offended.

"Of course! It slipped my mind. We have reached an impasse. *You* seek to remodel this world to your Utopian desires by sweet reason and exhortations."

Caesar smiled sarcastically.

"I should have tried my poets on Vercingetorix and the Teuton hordes. It would have proved a pleasant sight."

"Exactly," Napoleon agreed. "We soldiers are first and last realists. Men do not follow ideas; they follow force. If we are to gain control of the living, we must do it by showing ourselves the stronger. We have not spent our time in eternity in vain." He waved his short, plump hand toward the street. "Those are the first fruits. Their minds are tuned to ours. They will follow us to the death, because we deftly planted certain slogans in their brains. They are no longer men; they are soldiers submissive to our will."

Socrates went to the door; looked out; and returned. A sceptical smile wreathed his ugly countenance.

"You have picked your subjects with practiced skill," he observed gently.

"They are men of muscle; diggers of the soil, artisans of the mill; men unaccustomed to the shining weapons of the mind. No wonder they follow you to the wars like dogs after their master."

"All men are like that," asserted Alexander. "Philosophers are few; the men of brutish instinct many."

Socrates shook his head.

"Nay, that is no longer so. Truth must have slowly made its way during the centuries. In the days when I paced the tree-lined walks of Athens with Plato and a few precious disciples, you may have been right. We were then a slim handful in a world of blood and deeds. But today, look around you. We have returned to a land where education and the things of the spirit are universal. I myself am clad in the form of a living man who taught philosophy, not to twos and threes, as I was won't to do; but to hundreds and hundreds. Every hamlet has its school; every town its university. There is peace and plenty."

NAPOLEON frowned.

"I wondered why we came back to America. None of us belong here. In Europe, where was once our home, there is no such peace or plenty."

"I had method in my madness," Bacon said. "I realized before I opened the path that we would disagree. In Europe there was too much timber for your fire. Here in America we have more chance to prove our point." He smiled shrewdly. "That in itself is but an instance of the superiority of thought to force."

"Hmmm!" Napoleon seemed wrapped in thought. Then he spoke with a frank, open countenance. "Perhaps you are right. If you are, I am willing to yield, and follow you on the way to Utopia." To Gene it appeared

that he was sneering. "I have a sporting proposition to make to you."

Voltaire looked distrustful.

"Beware Napoleon when he bears gifts," he murmured.

"There are no catches. You yourselves will be the judges. Here in this little American town into which Bacon was good enough to dump us there is a university. Socrates has just expatiated on the blessings of culture. He has actually found the form of a philosopher to wrap around him. There are hundreds of students within these tree-lined walks; dozens of professional promulgators of the uses of thought. Here, if anywhere, are there living subjects fit for your plans. Certainly these ardent searchers after truth must bow before your superior wisdom, and swear to follow you to the intellectual ends of the earth. Certainly they have nothing but contempt for crude violence, for the compulsion of man's free spirit. Certainly they would cry us out of their councils."

Glenda reached in a non-existent pocket for a non-existent pinch of snuff. Her lovely face screwed up in sharp, suspicious lines.

"He protests too much," she shook her head. "I mislike it."

"Commend your proposition to our ears," Shakespeare demanded.

Napoleon looked slowly around the circle. Gene strained to listen. Somehow he knew that the crafty Corsican was fixing up a scheme.

"It is quite simple," he said. "Let us all appear among these students. Let us state our respective cases to them. Choose you among yourselves your most persuasive speaker. We shall do the same. We agree in advance to exercise no compulsion such as inheres to us from our stay across the border. If the students hearken to you, we yield the earth to you. If they follow us,

then we take over. Is it a bargain?"

"It's a trap," Gene burst out. "Don't listen to his smooth plans. I saw him wink before to Caesar. When he was alive, he gained as much with plottings as on the field of battle."

"Why do we permit this paltry human to be present at our councils?" Napoleon's dark face suffused with anger. "Richard! This is your task."

The giant Tim Foley clenched a huge fist; lurched forward.

"This is better," he growled. "I am tired of palaver. When he but feels the weight of my hand—"

Shakespeare interposed himself deftly.

"Keep your massive brawn to yourself, friend Richard," he said. "He is a likely lad; one of my own craft. Had he a beard, I would have been one with him, instead of this paunchy doctor who resembles Falstaff more than myself. Beshrew me if I do not admire his independent spirit, even to our very fronts. He shall come to no harm, do you hear?"

The luster died from Richard's eye.

"Have your way, Will," he muttered, discomfited. "I never was one to bandy words with you. Yet I would have felt better if I could have knocked him down."

ANGER flared through Gene at his words. He forgot where he was, and the strange company he was in.

"You had better keep a civil tongue in your head, Tim Foley, or Richard, or whoever the devil you are," he exploded. "Big as you are, don't try to start anything."

But no one seemed to pay any attention now to the solitary mortal in their midst. Bacon brushed him back with an annoyed gesture as though he were a troublesome insect; then turned his somber eyes on Napoleon.

"We accept your challenge, Napoleon," he said quietly.

The Emperor nodded. His dark face displayed no emotion.

"Very good. Let Socrates, in the form of Dr. George Alsop, member of the Faculty, arrange the meeting."

Gene felt himself caught up in their swift procession to the door. His outburst had drained him of human emotion. He was only a helpless pawn in the game that these immortals were playing against each other; suffered to remain a witness merely through the fleeting kindliness of Shakespeare for a fellow craftsman.

In the wide, shaded street a commotion had arisen. The group of men who had followed the compulsion of the conquerors stood stolidly as they had been left. They neither spoke to each other nor looked to the right or left. They seemed like robots that had run down and awaited the electric spark of their masters.

But from the direction of the College young men were running. The last reverberation of the chapel bell was swinging away on the air. It was two: forty-five, the last regular class for the day.

Fresh, clean-cut young fellows, wholesome with health and alert intelligence upon their faces. The College standards were high, and the student body was picked with great care.

In seconds the strangely immobile group was surrounded by a jostling, curious horde.

"What's the parade about?" yelled a Freshman.

"Can't you fellows talk?"

"Speak up! What do you want on our grounds?"

But no one answered. Not a single mill-hand turned his blank stare on the growing mob. Questions gave way to jeers; jeers to catcalls. A big football

player growled:

"All right, fellows. They're trying to be funny. Let's get them off the grounds, and back where they belong."

There was a concerted rush.

Richard the First lifted his voice in a huge, joyous shout. The red hair of Tim Foley seemed to bristle; battle lust inflamed his eyes.

"At them, men," he yelled. "For God and St. George!"

His thundering tones seemed to release a spring. The brawny workers and farmers awoke to sudden life. They wheeled in a disciplined mass and met the disordered rush of students with swift charge and methodically flailing fists. They fought like machines rather than like men.

There was something terrifying to Gene in the way they surged forward, restless, heads low, slugging with either hand. He tried to fling off the porch to stop the madness, but iron bands seemed to constrain his muscles and hold him helpless.

Fuming, furious, he saw with terrible clarity what the victory of the returned conquerors would mean. Mass hypnosis, robot-like followers sweeping the world with irresistible efficiency, compelling all mankind to the dictatorial will of these four who even in death had not lost the lust for domination.

THE college men, taken unaware by the strange fury of the attack, fought gallantly but futilely. Their ranks scattered, a dozen went down under pistonlike fists; and the rest broke and fled toward the campus.

Richard rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Methinks my own Crusaders could not have done better than these strong villeins. It was, fair sirs, such a sight as I had ne'er expected to see again."

"And you won't any more," Napoleon turned on him, black as thunder.

"You're a ninny. You may have the heart of a lion, Richard, but your brain is that of an ass."

The big man looked hurt.

"What have I done wrong, Napoleon?"

"Everything," Caesar spoke up. "What good is it for Napoleon to lay his careful strategy and for myself to plan swift, crushing attacks in overwhelming force when you start some silly child's play that may spoil everything. Even Alexander would have more sense than that."

The Greek started.

"Now look here, Caesar," he declared heatedly. "I didn't need ten Roman legions to overawe a single wretched tribe. *My* victories were always over overwhelming odds."

"Stop it!" Napoleon raised stentorian voice. "You're quarreling like a pack of fools. Haven't the centuries taught you wisdom? Look at Socrates watching us with placid benevolence; and Voltaire grinning as though to egg us on. If we divide, they win; don't you understand?"

Caesar subsided.

"You're right," he said sulkily. "Yet Alexander shouldn't say things like that about me. He knows they're not true."

Shakespeare hummed a little tune.

"Mortal or immortal; the tongues of men beshrew their minds," he sang.

Bacon looked grim.

"Enough of idle chatter. We have made a bargain and it must be kept. Socrates, do you proceed with the plan we laid before this business of fists and brawls. King Richard, do you march your men in here for hiding until the thing be settled."

They worked fast then, and with a will. Gene, still locked in that strange compulsion of his limbs, though his mind was free, could only watch and seek feverishly some avenue of escape.

Once he begged Glenda, as she passed, to let him go; but the spirit of Voltaire peeped mockingly out of her eyes.

"You are but an oaf," he grinned, "to wish to leave our presence. Where else could you observe so well the fact that, alive or dead, simple as good Richard or wise as Socrates, the race of man pollutes the universe." Then she passed on.

Shakespeare brushed his fervent plea aside.

"Thou art an ungrateful wretch," he frowned, intent on other things. "Would you follow the men of arms rather than the men of wisdom? Go to, or I shall repent my kindness."

Socrates, in the shape of Alsop, had gone ahead. With him went Glenda. By the time the mill-hands had been herded in the house, and the others had strolled like any group of casual visitors down to the campus, past the gray-stone buildings to the chapel, the college had been assembled for their coming.

HOW Alsop had accomplished it, Gene was never to know. What manner of persuasion was employed neither he, nor those who obeyed his will, could remember in the slightest after the event.

But when they appeared on the platform, a sea of faces stretched before them. The front benches were filled with the members of the Faculty, headed by the full-faced, white-bearded Dr. Hutchinson, President of the College. Behind them sat the entire student body, from the youngest freshman to the most dignified senior. No one had escaped the net.

They stared curiously at the cluster of men and the single girl who had taken their places on the platform. Not a sound escaped their lips. An uncanny silence hovered over all. Warm red light, religiously subdued,

streamed through the stained-glass windows from the westering sun, and cast an eerie glow upon their faces. Their minds seemed free, yet strangely constrained to listen without surprise. Even as Gene's own mind had been from that first meeting on top of the hill, now so curiously remote.

Dr. George Alsop faced them first. They knew him, yet somehow they knew as well that he was Socrates, come from the wastes of time to talk to them. The goatish expression that had overlaid his face consorted oddly with his big, loose frame and baggy clothes. The hush deepened.

"In Athens," he said, "I had but a mere dozen disciples, gathered together to examine life and beauty and truth. The rest ran after the sophist Protagoras and his kind, or wasted their days in pleasures. Now, in this place, more than half a thousand pursue the ways of reason; yet you are only a company of those who, all over earth, hunger for knowledge and the life of the mind."

Bacon nodded sagely; but Glenda, Gene noticed, looked satiric.

"I died," continued Socrates, "as all men must. Yet I did not die. Even in life I knew that thought was eternal. In the universe of Ideas I met kindred spirits; those who had gone before and those who came afterward. I also met those who had differed on earth and remained unchanged in infinity. What we were in the flesh, we were as disembodied thought."

Caesar nudged Alexander and whispered something in his ear. The Greek smiled for the first time since Gene had met him.

"We watched the earth," the philosopher went on. "We saw birth, life and passing death. We observed wars and famines and the steady growth of knowledge. When Francis Bacon joined our ranks, he spoke of an ideal com-

monwealth soon to come. When Shakespeare drifted in our midst, we knew that the sweet uses of poetry had found their supreme master. With Voltaire came that skeptical disillusion which is the mark of civilized intellect. There were others who followed—each with the report of new conquests of the mind—each optimistic of the steady growth of truth."

Richard shifted his huge body and looked sulky. His name had not been mentioned. But Napoleon sat inscrutable, surveying the chapel with dark, emotionless eyes.

SOCRATES leaned forward, and an urgency came into his tones.

"But things soon changed. War and slaughter swept the fair earth, on a scale far beyond the bloodlettings even of my friend, Bonaparte. Insane hatreds blossomed like rank weeds, choked off all tolerance and truth. The contagion spread; is spreading now even faster. Unless it is stopped, this earth which is ours as well as yours; for which we lived and died, will revert to the brute and leave us vanish into the limbo of forgotten things. For we exist only as long as our memories are green in the minds of those who are our inheritors.

"Some few of us decided this must not be. Bacon pondered the problem and resolved the answer. We returned."

He glanced sadly at the four conquerors.

"We made a mistake," he avowed. "We brought back with us those who tried on a limited scale during life what the madmen who rule your world today are doing in whirlwinds of blood and tears. Therefore we must seek your aid in what we intend. I am Socrates, the humblest seeker after truth. You may have half-forgotten me. But here are Francis Bacon, who took all knowledge

for his province, Shakespeare, the loftiest spirit of any age, and Voltaire, whose keen wit and healthy laughter swept away the accumulated frauds of centuries. It is fitting that he appear before you in the fresh young garb of a girl. His is an ageless spirit.

"Follow them, I beg you; and the world is yours to remake and reshape to your hearts' desire. You, the inheritors of their mighty brains, the students of their lustrous wisdom, are their disciples. It is a Crusade—not such a Crusade as Richard blunderingly followed—but a shining adventure after an ordered commonwealth of earth, with tolerance, learning, wisdom and graciousness the four pillars of support; a world where philosophers will be kings, and kings philosophers."

He stopped abruptly, and Gene, listening with thudding heart and shining eyes, felt a great surge within him. His doubts were resolved, his fears for the incalculable disruption that this return of the ancient spirits might bring. Socrates was right. They had found the solution to the ills of the world. No one who valued the things of the mind, who had ever received in the slightest the illumination of their thoughts, could resist their bright appeal. Surely these young men and old, nurtured in an atmosphere of the intellect, must rise as one to thunder their approval.

He glanced down at the seated figures. Something stirred—something moved over their faces. Their frozen features relaxed, they turned to look at each other, seeking confirmation in their fellows of what they dimly felt in the recesses of their own minds. Gene jumped impetuously to his feet. It needed only the exhortation of one of their own kind to stir them.

"**L**OOK at me, men of Stonehill," he cried out. "I am Eugene West-

cott, a living, breathing human being such as yourselves. Up till now I was afraid of these beings from the dead, but now I am convinced that Socrates and his companions can make the world a better place. Join them; follow them to the ends of the earth. But beware of Napoleon, of Caesar and Alexander, of Richard the Lion-Hearted. They would lead you to the conquests they had left unfinished while alive; they will cheat you—"

Glenda put a firm, slim hand on the excited dramatist, tugged him back to his seat just as Richard started up with a crash that flung his chair across the platform.

"You fool!" she whispered—or rather Voltaire did, "they'll eliminate you as easily as though you were a crawling insect. Do not interfere if you value your life."

Napoleon said quietly.

"Sit down, Richard." The big, red-headed foreman hesitated, growled, and picked up his chair. Napoleon got up slowly. Most of the faculty and many of the students of Stonehill College knew Lucius Halliday. As teacher in the village high school he ranked comparatively low; certainly not as high as Alsop, who had just finished speaking.

He was under average height, and his paunch made him look even shorter. His sallow skin and lank black hair resembled slightly the texture of the Emperor of the French. His sunken eyes helped the illusion. But, staring at him, held by that strange physical compulsion which nevertheless left their minds unhampered, the students knew that it was Napoleon Bonaparte who stood before them, even as it had been Socrates a minute before. The stir subsided; the blankness of their faces shifted into position like masks.

Napoleon looked down upon them.

His pudgy hand crept up into his vest in a studied, well-remembered gesture. He smiled.

"My children," he said, "Socrates has made a speech. I do not intend to do so. He was always a well-meaning sort of a fellow, but curiously muddled, the same as all theorists. He has his place, and so have Shakespeare and the rest of them. But when this world of ours ever wanted anything done, it called on us, the plain men, the doers, the soldiers. Aristotle and Socrates talked Greek culture, but it was my friend, the great Alexander, who spread that culture over the world. Virgil wrote his nice little poems, but it was the mighty Caesar who built Rome so that it endured for four hundred years. The medieval philosophers disputed about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin, but it was Richard, well-named the Lion-Hearted, who overcame the infidel and saved civilization."

Richard grinned self-consciously at this slightly inaccurate description of his conquests.

"As for myself," said the wily Napoleon, "it doesn't become me to talk. But let me ask my friend, Voltaire—he whose spirit of eternal mockery is aptly clad in the lovely garments of a girl—who was it that did more to break down the fetishes and narrow nationalisms of Europe than my humble self?"

Specious arguments, thought Gene; yet subtly plausible. Of course, if one tried to analyze . . .

TODAY you are confronted with a situation," the Corsican went on conversationally. "I agree with friend Socrates. Madmen are in control. Men who aren't fit to shine the shoes of such a man as Caesar." He turned with an enigmatic smile to the four silent exponents of the intellect. "Not

even of these worthy people. But they have the power. They tell you what to do; what to think as well. How did they get this power? By force; by the weight of arms, or the threat of them.

"Where are your so-called philosophers today? You have them. Perhaps not as splendid as Socrates and Voltaire and Bacon and Shakespeare; but good enough in their way. Let me see. I think I know some of their names. Einstein, Thomas Mann, Wells, Millikan, Rolland, Santayana—why, you have any number of them! But what have they done?

"Talked, wrote, waged war with words." He was openly contemptuous now. "The result? Nothing. Those who aren't in exile or fleeing for their lives will soon be. Words are all right in their place, but not against machine guns and bombs and raiding planes. You need to fight fire with fire."

His voice raised gradually until it was a thunder of sound. His eyes flamed. His sallow countenance became transfigured. "Fire with fire!" he repeated. "We are four doers. We showed when we lived what we could do. We can sweep these puny upstarts from the earth in a single campaign. Are you men or are you women like Voltaire? Will you follow the talkers or the doers? If you wish to save civilization, to unite all earth in a single mighty state, follow us. In thunder and in smoke, in battle flame and in the clash of arms, we, the soldiers, shall conquer for you. Arouse, my children! Strike now, while it is yet time! Strike for victory!"

His arms spread suddenly wide in a superb gesture.

At once the chapel was in pandemonium. Students and Faculty alike jumped from their seats, cheered, shouted, stamped and whistled. The venerable President danced in the

aisles like a madman, his white hair disheveled, screaming, "Victory!" over and over again.

On all their faces a single emotion showed. A mob emotion. They clenched their fists and shook them in the air. A measured chant rose from their lips, grew in volume until it shook the building.

"Victory! Victory! Lead us to victory!"

SOMETHING snapped in Gene. He had listened to Napoleon in enforced silence. He had been confident of the outcome. Surely this picked group of civilized human beings would not hesitate. They had been taught to reverence men like Bacon and Shakespeare; they had studied in their histories the splendid lies of the conquerors and detected the miseries that lay underneath. They were trained to dissociate reason from emotion, logic from oratory.

Yet as the Corsican builded up, Gene felt uneasy. He caught the rapt gleam in the eyes of the auditors; he felt something stir in his own blood and make his breath come in short, quick gasps. After all, wasn't it true? Words hadn't stopped the dictators. Force was the only thing they respected. Very well, then, meet force with force. *Fire with fire.* A very good phrase. This was a job for men of action. Kill, slay, wipe them out! His breathing grew shallower and faster. It fell into a rhythm with the concerted breathing of half a thousand others. Napoleon's words swayed and danced in his ears, beating out the time.

Victory! Strike for victory!

The thrilling phrases exploded like a bomb in his mind. He jumped up with the others. He screamed and pounded in unison with them.

"Lead us to victory!" he chanted.

"*Mes enfants!*" thundered Napoleon.

"Follow me; follow Caesar and Alexander and Richard! We go to conquer the world."

He was no longer a short, fat man. He had swollen to gigantic-seeming proportions. He stalked off the platform, marched down the central aisle. Caesar, smiling with inner thought, was at his side. Alexander, impetuous and fiery, trod on their heels. Richard lumbered after, bewildered, but caught up in the current of his leader's speech.

"God and St. George!" His bull voice outdistanced them all.

Behind them, tumbling, jostling, eager to be the first, swept the mob of students and instructors. On their uplifted faces and in their furious eyes was stamped indelibly the lust for battle, for blood and carnage and glory. The gentle little Professor of Aesthetics shoved against the captain of the football team; the Professor of Greek straightarmed the Associate in History out of his way.

Out through the door they went, their shouts resounding across the spacious campus. Not a one remained behind.

No one, that is, except four rigid, silent figures on the platform. Socrates and Bacon and Shakespeare and Voltaire. Four of the mightiest spirits that had ever lived; the precious heritages of the realm of thought. Four, and a single human being to keep them unwilling company.

GENE WESTCOTT had started up with the rest. In a blaze of emotion he tried to follow as the captains marched through the chapel.

But a soft, white hand laid gently on his arm. He threw it off impatiently; then a tiny sliver of sanity caused him to turn. His blurred eyes beheld Glenda; his overheated brain felt the small, cool words drop into it like tiny pebbles.

Somehow the satiric mockery was

gone from her eyes; the strange quirk that twisted her lips. This was Glenda Gordon, a human being like himself. He had sat with her, and dined with her, and taken long, magical rambles. He had loved her!

"Gene!" said Glenda softly. "Do not follow the mob. Remain with us; with me." Her full lips quivered. "Voltaire is saddened by this sight. Yet he had not expected anything else from the race of humans. He will depart soon with the others. I shall be free. But if you join the shouting mob, then nothing will matter—for me."

Gene stared at the girl. Martial music throbbed in his ears; his veins raced with the sound of slogans. But slowly the delirium dropped from him. His pounding blood slowed; his brain gradually cleared.

"Good God!" he groaned. "What was I about to do?"

Voltaire peeped once more from Glenda's eyes. They were half-mocking, half sad.

"What everyone else has done," he observed. "I for one should have known better; if the others did not. Man is still an animal, subject to emotions rather than the cool breath of reason. Earth is not worth saving."

Bacon got to his feet. He seemed tired.

"It never was," he said. "We have failed. We were poor fools who meditated in the infinite void." He smiled mirthlessly. "We always meditated in a void. We forgot what happened to us when we were alive. We thought mankind was ripe for our return. We have learned our lesson."

"A lesson we should have conned before we started," said Voltaire, the irrepressible. "There is more of irony in it than I ever dared put into the covers of *Candide*. In this best of all possible worlds not even a single human being

succumbed to the irresistible compulsions of truth, of beauty, of the sublimities of philosophy." He looked maliciously at Gene, who reddened. "Not even our young dramatist whom Shakespeare favored. He too wished to follow the captains of war, the apostles of force, the exponents of blood and iron."

"We weren't free to choose," Gene answered weakly.

Socrates sat where he was, his eyes filled with infinite melancholy.

"The soul of man is always free," he declared. "The seeming compulsions that we, timeless in our death, had laid upon you were but the outer representations of your inner, hidden selves. You yielded to that which best expressed your desires." He smiled ruefully. "We, who called ourselves philosophers, poets, scientists, considered that you were ripe, after centuries of sowing, for the harvest of wisdom and truth. We find instead that man's nature has not changed since Alexander and before."

GENE turned his head away in shame. He was as guilty as the rest. Long shadows slanted across the chapel. The light that filtered through the stained medallions was dimly red. Outside, dusk was falling. Silence reigned again. The captains and the shouting had departed, seeking new fields, new hordes to lead to battle.

He had a sudden vision of innumerable towns along the way, adding their quotas to the whelming flood. Then Boston and New York, Chicago and San Francisco. Ships and planes to speed across the ocean. London, Berlin, Paris; Moscow, Tokyo, Rome. He turned back, shivering.

"They are gone!" he whispered. "You, timeless as they, have failed. We, flesh and blood, must fail as well. Neither bullets nor ideas can stop them. What shall we do?"

"We have made our bargain," said Shakespeare, stroking his beard. "They go on to triumph and the seizure of a living world. We," he grinned, "go back to the vasty deeps to meditate upon the mutability of all things."

"Once before," murmured Socrates, "I drank the hemlock. It was a bitter draught to start, but pleasant enough at the lees. I do not shrink from it now."

Gene faced them in a glow of indignation.

"I was ashamed of myself before for having yielded to Napoleon's mummery," he said steadily, "but I am no longer. I am only an ordinary human being, still alive. I haven't your genius, your marvelous intellects. Nor have I the benefit of release from the hamperings of the flesh, of century-long meditations. Yet I refuse to despair as easily as you do."

"This is your problem, as well as ours. You, Francis Bacon, brought this madness upon us. Very likely we would have overcome our mortal dictators in time. The human race has shown in the past a resiliency in yielding to present disaster and rising to fresh heights from the ashes of its hopes. But now you disrupted the natural laws of things. You brought back to the living the most ruthless conquerors of all times. Singly they overran the earth; united they are irresistible. Worse still, they are timeless. We, the living, must remain in perpetual slavery. You brought them here. You must get rid of them."

For a moment after his outburst there was silence. Then Bacon said reluctantly.

"There is a way. The process by which we penetrated into the forms of the living can be reversed."

Gene drew a deep breath.

"Then, for God's sake, do it!"

Bacon looked at his fellows.

"This matter is not simple," he said. "It means that we too must return with them. We must give up all hopes of ever coming back to green fields and the sun and the fresh smell of grass in the morning and the sight of the sea in storm."

"Lord Bacon waxeth poetical," grinned Shakespeare. "Mayhap he wrote my plays after all, as has been said. Mayhap I did but sleep and dream—"

"You choose to laugh," Bacon said soberly. "This is no laughing matter. For if we so decide, we go to wander again in the drear wastes of infinity, disembodied intelligences, spirits without roots in matter, dependent for our very existence upon the fleeting memories of mortal men. Those who know of us are pitifully few today. Should their numbers grow less; should the thought of us fade, then we too shall fade into oblivion."

AGAIN there was silence. Gene, fighting for the safety of the living, felt the inner struggle of these men of the past. He tried to speak, to exhort; but the words choked in his throat. What could he tell them that they didn't know?

At last Shakespeare sighed.

"I had a couple of plays knocking about in the empty corridors of my pate. I was but a fumbling amateur in *Hamlet* and *Lear*. I thought to set them down for the delectation of mankind."

Bacon nodded.

"Out there I discovered the true constitution of the Universe. I wished to set the men of science aright in their fundamental concepts."

But Voltaire laughed with the musical laugh of Glenda Gordon.

"Nay, of what benefit are more plays and more theories? Napoleon and Caesar will permit only those that suit

their purposes. We have played out our brief play, Messieurs. It is fitting that we turn out the lights and finish the farce."

Socrates rose quietly. Doc Lesser's features shone with a strange exaltation.

"I agree with Voltaire, though not with his cynicism. We have sought the Ultimate on earth as well as in the reaches of the infinite. Nowhere have we done more than catch at the hem of her being. Perhaps in that Limbo from which we shrink, the Ultimate resides. I for one will welcome the final experience, the last cup of hemlock."

"You needn't fear," Gene cried eagerly. "I promise to keep your names alight as the great exemplars of mankind. I'll write plays; I'll proclaim your ideas from one end of the world to the other. Dr. Alsop, the mold of Socrates, will exhort his students to cherish your dreams and hand them down from generation to generation; Doc Lesser will help, and so will Glenda."

Voltaire chuckled.

"It still would be a scant dozen in each generation."

"As long as a single spirit upholds the torch of truth," Socrates reproved him, "we neither lived nor wandered in vain. What say you, Will Shakespeare, and you Bacon?"

Shakespeare shrugged.

"I once did boast that neither marble nor resounding brass would outlive my rhymes. Belike my jest had some manner of substance in it. I yielded this life to the living."

"And I," said Bacon, "who perhaps will first be forgotten by the world of men, am willing, too. So, being decided, I shall do what is necessary."

A great wind seemed to come out of nowhere. Darkness filled the chapel. It was suddenly cold. Gene began to tremble. The skin prickled on his body. His hair bristled as though it were elec-

trified. Blinded, he tried to grope his way toward where he had seen Voltaire last.

"Glenda!" he shouted. "Where are you?"

His voice was curiously muffled. Vague shapes seemed to flow past him; dark shapes that coagulated and moved with the wind.

Then the wind subsided, and light grew slowly in the void. First a thin, slanting ray through dim-seen panels; then a blood-red blaze as of sunset outside.

Gene looked eagerly around, blinking in the eerie illumination. Three men and a girl stood rigid, exactly where they had been before the muffling darkness. They too were blinking, staring about them in utter bewilderment. They seemed to have awakened from a deep sleep.

Doc Lesser ran his hand over his scanty hair.

"What the devil!" he ejaculated. "How come I'm here? Last I remember I was driving along—" Then his eyes fell on Gene and he gulped. "Oh!" he said. That was all.

Dr. Alsop looked curiously at the others.

"Hello, Gene! Hello, Glenda! I—I must have fallen asleep." He yawned. "Hard day, you know."

Josh Wiley seemed ill at ease. The place frightened him.

"I—I must be going," he stammered. "There's nobody in the store to wait on customers." He left hurriedly, his long legs knocking against each other.

Glenda's eyes widened on Gene.

"Gene!" she cried bewilderedly. "I had such a peculiar dream. But what are we doing in this place? I don't remember—"

HE went to her, enfolded her in his arms. He could feel the thump of

her heart against his.

"I hope," he told her fervently, "you never will remember."

Someone was tapping him on the shoulder. He turned. It was Lesser, looking very grim.

"I want to see you for a moment," he said. "And you too, Dr. Alsop."

Glenda said,

"It's my dream. It was awful." She pulled away from the young man. Her voice was low, tense. "That's what's making you all so scared. It—it was true."

"Nonsense!" Gene told her jocularly. "Doc just wants to tell us a clinical joke."

"It was true," she repeated.

He sighed. This was going to be hard.

"Yes, I suppose I'll have to tell you all. It isn't over yet."

He told them. It took ten minutes, but no one stirred. The chapel had darkened. Outside, the campus was curiously still.

"They have gone back," he finished quietly. "But were they able to take the others with them? If not—" There was no need for him to finish the sentence. Everyone knew what that meant.

George Alsop took out a large handkerchief; mopped himself violently.

"Lord!" he whispered. "To think that I was Socrates! I would have given my right arm to have known."

"But how are we going to find out?" demanded Lesser.

Gene lifted his finger. "Sssh!" he beckoned for silence. "Listen to that."

Through the open door at the farther end of the chapel a murmur whispered. It grew louder. Confused sounds, the jangling of far-off voices, the thud of many feet.

Gene was the first to race out on the campus, but the others were not far behind. To the north, where the faculty houses edged the campus, a disordered

group of men were milling around just outside Alsop's porch. They were dressed in rough working clothes and they were having a loud and heated argument. The campus lights had sprung up and illuminated their bewildered faces.

"I tell you I ain't never come here by myself," a burly farmer yelled. "It's ha'nts, I tell you."

But from the south came a more awe-inspiring sight. Streaming in ragged array from the direction of Amosville, pouring onto the campus in tumultuous flood, roared the student body of the College. Here and there, in their midst, like chips tossing on a storm-blasted sea, jostled frightened members of the faculty. The white beard and drooping bearing of the President was particularly conspicuous. A kindly senior was supporting his lagging feet.

Bringing up the rear, keeping to themselves, as if somehow they were anathema, moved four figures. As they passed under the string of lamps, Gene gave a great shout.

"Here they come!" he cried tensely. "Now we'll know."

THE red-topped head of Tim Foley loomed above the others. Next him was the young drug clerk, Rufe Greene. His good-looking, if rather weak face showed signs of panic. A little apart strode Harvey Wiggs, attorney and counsellor-at-law. He seemed a little disdainful of the company he was in; and too proud to show the puzzlement that gnawed at his vitals.

But Lucius Halliday betrayed no sign of fear or surprise. His short legs moved doubly fast to keep up with the others; his well-filled belly waddled a bit as he hastened his step. But he was not ludicrous. Something of Napoleon had remained to stamp his features with indelible marks.

Babbling excitedly, whooping with half-hysterical release, the student body swept over the campus, bearing the helpless faculty along. Everyone spoke at once; voices called across the mass, seeking friends, demanding explanations.

"We must have all gotten cock-eyed drunk," some one yelled.

"Me, I need a drink just now," retorted another.

"Make it a couple. I've been seeing things."

But Gene and the three with him paid no attention to the students. They were not important. All eyes focused on the men who stumbled along in the rear. They were coming past the chapel, not speaking to each other, yet knowing somehow that they had nothing in common with the men from college.

Halliday looked toward the chapel and smiled. It was an enigmatic smile.

Lesser clutched Gene's arm.

"Lord, he *does* look like Napoleon! I never noticed it before."

"Yes." The young man clamped his teeth shut. He did not dare say any more.

But Halliday shook himself a little and hurried on. Foley saw them too. He started to run.

"He's coming for us," gasped Glenda.

Unconsciously Gene drew back his fist. Tim Foley—or Richard—which?

The brawny mill foreman came up gasping.

"Doc Lesser! Thank God I found you!" He was almost blubbering. "Something's wrong with me! I got took with a spell, an' next thing I know I'm almost to Amosville, in the middle of a bunch o' howling nuts. I ain't goin' crazy, am I, doc?"

Lesser stared up at the pleading Irishman.

"No!" he shook his head gently. "You won't go crazy. Just go home and get some sleep. You'll be all right in the morning."

"Gee, thanks, doc. For a while I thought that mebbe—"

He fled noisily down the road. They could hear him roaring out surprised oaths at his lumber crew as he encountered them still arguing before Alsop's house.

For the first time Gene permitted himself to exhale.

"It's Tim Foley all right," he said.

"But how about Halliday?" Alsop queried anxiously. "He still *looks* like Napoleon."

"Napoleon's gone with the others," Gene said decisively. "He's left a physical imprint, that is all. The two were somewhat alike to start with. Let's forget the whole thing now."

BUT they never forgot. The affair was a nine-day wonder. Reporters descended on the little College town in a horde. The great metropolitan newspapers played up the mass migration in sensational headlines. Learned men discoursed of lemmings and crowd-hypnosis. For a few weeks Stonehill basked in the glare.

Then other things happened. Scandals in Hollywood, crises in Europe, elections, a murder in high society. Stonehill dropped out of sight.

But Gene and Glenda, Doc Lesser and Alsop, foregathered often to discuss the strange irruption from the past. Sometimes, in the middle of their talk, a sudden silence seized them. It seemed then as though the shadows stirred and whispered in the room; that Shakespeare and Socrates, Bacon and Voltaire were watching them with sad, inscrutable eyes.

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Concluded from page 6)

WITH our January issue, we present the final "Carson of Venus" story, which will wind up one of Edgar Rice Burroughs' most popular series (eventually it'll be a novel in book form) in many years. We hope that he will be back again soon with another novel for us. Perhaps next year. Right now, we hear from him from Hawaii where he still basks on tropic sands. The lucky son of a gun!

IF you haven't gotten a copy of the November AMAZING STORIES, which is still on sale at your newsstand, take a tip from us and go out for it right now. The reason is a story by your favorite author, William P. McGivern, "Convoy to Atlantis" which is the most amazing story we've read in many a day. It's about a Nazi submarine base in Atlantis! And it's the most exciting, and perhaps the most prophetic story we've yet had on the present war.

WHEN we were about to go to press with this issue, we found ourselves with an embarrass-

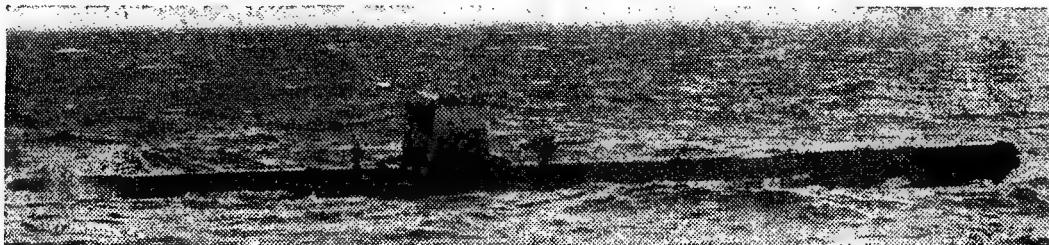
ing hole to fill, and were in something of a dither about it. And right in the middle of it a manuscript was slapped on our desk, and we looked up into the face of a stranger—at least to the readers of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. His name is Dwight V. Swain, and he's been reading us for a long time. Now, right in our emergency, he did a story for us, and came in, absolutely sure he had one we wouldn't like. He was very apologetic about it, but we leave it up to you. Were we right in buying this first story from a new writer? It's "Henry Horn's Super-Solvent" which begins on page 128. Somehow it reminds us of Hugo Gernsback's stories. Remember "The Seiditzmobile" and "The Gyroscope Hat"? Well, this yarn has that atmosphere. Anyway, we introduce another newcomer to FA. Take a bow, Dwight.

JONGOR is coming back! You haven't forgotten ten "Jongor of Lost Land" in our October, 1940 issue, because you keep commenting on it. It was St. John's first cover for us, and the story was written around it. Now Robert Moore Williams is writing another yarn about Jongor, and once more it is going to cop a cover. We won't say exactly when it'll be published, but it'll be soon. Keep your eye peeled.

And now, with our usual sigh of regret, we are forced to leave you for another month. Until then, happy reading.

Rap

HOW ARE GERMAN POCKET SUBMARINES OPERATING SO FAR FROM THEIR BASES?



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BIG NOVEMBER ISSUE

AMAZING STORIES AT ALL NEWSSTANDS



"All I want's a job, Boss. I been outa work for a thousand years!"

AL ADDIN and the INFRA-RED LAMP

Albert got himself into a grand mess when he rubbed this strange lamp and a real genie answered!

by
**WILLIAM P.
McGIVERN**

HI, EVERYBODY!"

With easy nonchalance, Albert Addin strolled casually through lounge of the Tennis and Topper Club, ignoring the fact that nobody bothered to answer his greeting. Finally, he paused before the grill of the mail desk. There, a frosty-eyed clerk gave him his morning mail and a look that clearly said:

"Why don't you pay up your dues?"

Undisturbed by this official coldness, Albert pocketed his mail and made his way back to the lounge where he sank into an overstuffed leather armchair. Comfortably entrenched against any sudden shock, young Mr. Addin turned his attention to opening his daily communications.

A nasty dun letter from his tailor



made Albert wince a bit regretfully as he dropped it, half-read, into a waste-basket beside him. Another, and equally nasty, note from the gentlemen who had been silly enough to finance his sleek yellow roadster, comprised the contents of the second epistle he opened.

Albert shuddered slightly as he dropped the second letter into the deep-bellied ash tray beside his chair. The third letter caused him to frown. It was a brief and coldly legal notice from the bank, stating quite heartlessly that there would be no more annuity checks for another three months—due to the fact that he had overdrawn that far in advance.

His fourth communication was a telegram. Thoughtfully, Albert turned it over in his hands a bit before opening it, scarcely daring to hope that a rich uncle might have died somewhere. Then, deciding morosely that he didn't have any relatives who'd be decent enough to help him out by dying, he sighed and opened the telegram.

MOMENT IS RIPE. FATHER IN FINE MOOD. AUNT ANNABELLE ALMOST PLEASANT. YOU ARE TO COME UP TO MASTIFF MANOR FOR THE WEEKEND. BE PREPARED TO MAKE YOUR BEST IMPRESSION ON THEM, DEAREST, AND ALL WILL GO WELL. LOADS OF LOVE.

MARGOT.

Albert Addin read these lines and took a deep breath. Then he re-read them. No, there was no mistake. Incredible though it seemed, the telegram said what it said. The furrows of worry smoothed from his brow and a bland, almost beamish smile wreathed his features. A far-away, vacant glint of tenderness came into his gray eyes. This was from Margot. This was from the girl he loved, the girl he desired

to marry, the girl whose father was worth, roughly, a million of the crinkly green stuff.

"Somehow, Margot has brought him around," Albert told himself happily. "Somehow, she's worked the old bear into a state where he'd actually be willing to consider his daughter marrying me!" And then, reflectively, "And even Aunt Annabelle isn't in an axe-swinging mood!"

ALBERT ADDIN felt like singing, but because of the rules of quiet established for the benefit of the patriarch members of the Tennis and Topper Club, he confined his joy to humming a strain from that classic "Beat Me Bertha With a Scrub Stick Sizzle Bar."

For this looked like the omen of victory in his long battle for the hand of Margot Mastiff: A long and bloody battle which had been made almost impossible because of Margot's father, Major Mastiff, and her acid-hearted Aunt Annabelle—both of whom heartily detested the very sight of Albert.

Once, almost a year ago, Albert reflected, he hadn't been in disfavor with Margot's relatives. That was when his courtship of the fair Margot had been in its primary stage. That was when he had been cordially invited to spend a weekend at Mastiff Manor.

Albert felt a deep twinge of remorse as he remembered that weekend, now. He had brought his candid camera along with him—the love he held for cameras amounted to a craze with Albert—and had made himself the hit of the weekend taking pictures of all the assembled guests. Major Mastiff had beamed into his lens, Aunt Annabelle had even consented to pose, and Albert had had a merry time dashing about and clicking his shutter.

Everything had been rosy, and his

courtship had never looked more favorable. Albert left Mastiff Manor that Sunday with high hopes of an early marriage. But then his plans hit a sudden snag.

Albert developed the pictures he'd taken. The developed prints showed all too clearly that Albert Addin was a rotten photographer. The shots of the guests were fuzzy, odd-shaped, monstrous, and accidentally screamingly funny. Albert determined to burn them, to make up some plausable excuse for not shooting the prints along to the guests.

But before Albert was able to burn them, they were seen, and howled at, by a friend of his who had dropped in for a drink. The friend was the editor of that nasty little picture magazine, *Gaze*. It seemed that the editor of *Gaze* wanted to publish the pictures in his humor section. It seemed that Albert was—as usual—broke. It also seemed that the offer made by Albert's pal editor for the pictures was tempting—too tempting for the pecunious Albert to resist.

The snapshots appeared in *Gaze*.

The nation laughed uproariously. Major Mastiff had a stroke. Margot was almost prompted to give Albert the gate. Aunt Annabelle tried to bring suit against the "sniveling young upstart." Albert was banned from Mastiff Manor, and from that day forward was forced to conduct his courtship of Margot on the sly.

Until now.

"A master diplomat, Margot," Albert sighed happily. "A veritable genius at pouring oil on troubled waters!" And then he shook his head in admiration at the tremendous bit of soothing-over which his fianceé had accomplished since his banishment.

Albert felt warm inside, and very happy indeed. He could even gaze down

at the crumpled dun letters in the wastebasket beside him and beam cheerfully. For bills were no longer of any consequence, now that his courtship troubles were straightened out. For after all, the girl he was soon to marry had a filthy-rich father, didn't she?

So Albert rose happily, making his way across the lounge to the elevators, conscious that he had never loved Margot Mastiff more than at this moment. As the elevator took him up to his rooms, he broke forth into a light rendition of the second verse of "Mamma Your High-Falutin' Baby's Gone To Texas On a Jive Bar For a Break Bath."

HIS bags were on the bed and almost packed, half an hour later, for Albert wasn't going to waste any time in catching the swiftest train for Mastiff Manor. Glancing swiftly at his watch, Albert closed his bags and reached for his hat and coat. Then, for an instant, he hesitated, his glance going to his bathroom door a few steps away.

"Damn, I almost forgot," Albert said snapping his fingers. Then he stepped swiftly over to the bathroom door and opened it very, very carefully so that too much light wouldn't stream into its darkened interior. The management of the Tennis and Topper Club, not to mention that worthy organization's board of directors, would have been extremely shocked—not to mention angered—to know that young Albert Addin had turned the luxurious sunken bathroom of his suite into a photographic darkroom!

And now, with the door closed safely behind him, Albert turned on the faint light in his combination bathroom-darkroom, and gazed lovingly down into the washbowl at the photographic prints he'd left soaking. The photography bug in Albert had been too strong to allow him to pop off for a weekend while de-

veloping fluid ate away the artistry he'd caught in his latest camera efforts.

There were some special shots he'd taken—still life—of tables and oranges and bowls in his rooms, and now Albert was eagerly curious to see how they'd turned out. He'd been using a new technique picked up in a photography guide—infra red film filtering on still life shots.

Tenderly, Albert removed the prints from the fluid. Lovingly, he peered at them. Delightedly, he whistled. They weren't bad at all, which, for Albert, was a major triumph in camera lore.

"This shot of the apple on the table beside the couch is rather fine," he told himself exultantly. "Salon stuff, that's what it is!"

"Yes, indeed," Albert continued aloud, gazing at the print, "it's a duezzy, it's—"

Suddenly a frown broke out on Albert's face.

Something was screwy, definitely.

For, beside the apple on the table there was something else!

"Why," Albert gasped in astonishment, "that's an ancient oriental lamp, there!" He pursed his lips in bewilderment, for he was certain that when he'd photographed the apple there hadn't been any lamp on the table. The table had been bare but for the apple. He'd been shooting "simple, artistic" stuff, not cluttered tables!

AS ALBERT looked again, the lamp was still there in the print. Rubbing his finger across it didn't make it go away. He frowned, and still carrying the print, stepped swiftly out of his bathroom laboratory. Albert stepped across his bedroom and into his drawing room. There, in the corner, was the table. Beside it was the couch.

The table was the one he'd used in the shot. As a matter of fact, the ap-

ple was still on the table—with a piece bitten out of it—just as he'd left it the night before. Just as he'd left it after finishing his photographic efforts.

But there was no lamp there, and the realization of this seemed to reassure Albert. After all, if he'd photographed a lamp he would have been aware of it wouldn't he?

"Of course I would," Albert declared. "I most certainly would have been aware of a lamp, if one had been there!"

But when he looked quickly at the print in his hand, Albert was again shaken. There *was* a lamp, directly beside the apple on the table! But another glance at the actual table showed that there couldn't be.

"We'll see about this," Albert muttered resolutely stepping over to the table.

Albert put his hand down on the table, moving it slowly along the smooth wood surface. Then, suddenly, his hand stopped, sweat broke out on his forehead, and he gulped. Something was there beside the apple!

Something that he could feel, but couldn't see!

Carefully Albert allowed his hand to caress the object. It was rather small, pitcher shaped, metallic. Albert gulped again, and sweat broke out anew.

"And I haven't had a drop," Albert muttered. "Not a drop in three days!"

Gingerly, Albert lifted the invisible something-or-other, his hand trembling badly. Frantically, he strained his eyes, as if the very effort of their peering would bring this invisible thing-ama-jig into view.

And then, quite suddenly, as his hand trembled more than before, the invisible whatzit slipped from his clammy fingers, thudding onto the floor.

Instinctively, Albert's eyes followed the invisible drop. And at the instant his ears heard the "thunk" of the object

hitting the floor, Albert's eyes widened in startled incredulity. *The thing was now visible!**

It was as if the jar had shaken off its cloak of invisibility. And Albert, pop-eyed in astonishment, gazed down at the same oriental lamp that was seen on the print he held in his trembling hand!

"Presto," Albert gasped. "First I didn't see it, now I do!"

HANDLING the lamp carefully, Albert turned it over in a sort of stupefied curiosity. His mind was frantically trying to change gears, to adjust itself to the realization that here was an object which a moment before hadn't been visible for the naked eye to view. An object which he had unwittingly photographed, even though he hadn't been able to see it at the time.

Albert shook his head. An oriental lamp whose properties of remaining unseen had been destroyed by its fall to the floor. But the camera had seen it, even though he himself hadn't. Suddenly the furrows in Albert's brows lessened somewhat, and he almost grinned triumphantly at what he considered to be a swiftly arrived at solution.

"The infra-red film filter I had on

* Science has made things invisible, by means of reflected light rays, bending them around an object until no light is reflected back to a certain point, where the observer is stationed. Thus, an object may be made invisible. However, in this instance, it is obvious that the reflective properties of the surface of the lamp were such that all light was bent around the lamp and not reflected back at all. Thus, with no light turned more than momentarily from its course, no object could have been visible. When Albert Addin dropped the lamp, this perfect, non-reflecting, light-bending surface was dented enough to totally destroy the delicate balance of curving surface and reflecting angle. Thus, the lamp snapped into visibility. In photographing with an infra-red light filter, it seems that Albert unwittingly captured the only rays which were not by-passed around the lamp, which in normal color range, are invisible to the eye.—Ed.

the camera," he said aloud. "That's what did it!" Hazily, he had a mental vision of infra-red cutting through invisible cloaks like a classroom diagram. It was simple. The special filter, about which Albert knew absolutely nothing, had revealed an invisible object, about which he knew absolutely nothing. The two things had much in common, in that he knew nothing about either of them. Q. E. D. The infra-red film had penetrated the invisibility of the oriental lamp, and when the lamp fell to the floor, the shock had destroyed its invisibility.

The shock was gone, now, and Albert was left with only a vast pride at the clever way in which he had arrived at the nub of mystery.

"Pip, pip," he told himself. "Took a bit of clever thinking, eh wot?"

And suddenly, as he looked again at the lamp in his hand, Albert was struck by another staggeringly clever thought.

"This lamp," he declared brightly to the silence, "will make a tremendous hit with Margot's Aunt Annabelle. If I remember correctly, she collects old junk along this line."

So saying, Albert returned to the bedroom, stuffed the lamp into one of his bags, and turned to get his hat and coat. If there was any question in the back of his brain as to the origin of the lamp, or as to why it had been invisible, he wasn't concerned with such small matters at the moment. The thing had been invisible, now it wasn't. Aunt Annabelle would be delighted with it, and—besides, he'd have to hurry to catch his train.

CHAPTER II

Albert Has a Visitor

MARGOT MASTIFF, looking blond, demure, and lovely in the

white tennis costume she was wearing, met Albert at the railroad station of the little village several miles from Mastiff Manor.

They were jouncing along in the station wagon which Margot piloted with much daring and little skill, some twenty minutes later. Having made his greetings, congratulated his loved one on her finesse in smoothing the troubled waters, and commented on the weather, Albert was now sitting back smoking a cigarette and watching the outlines of Mastiff Manor rise in the distance.

"Got a present for your Aunt Annabelle," Albert said in a sudden surge of recollection, as Margot narrowly missed running down a chicken which had tried to cross the dusty country road. "A little antique, a mere bauble, which I'm certain she'll go for."

"Oh, Albert, that's marvelous!" Margot turned to give him a glance of breathless admiration, almost running the car off the road. "She'll be so pleased."

"Don't doubt it, old girl. But can't you watch where we're going a little more closely?" Albert was about to launch into a recounting of the mysterious circumstances under which he gained possession of the oriental oddity, but gave up the idea on the realization that the tale might end up with Margot's driving them into a ditch. Time enough for that later. Besides, the tale would make fine conversational fodder at the dinner table.

Then they were turning up the long drive leading into the estate of Mastiff Manor. The Manor was exactly as Albert remembered it. Huge, rambling, stone, a wing here and a wing there. The place was bedded in a vast sward of green lawn, and the lawn was spotted with tall, shade-giving oak trees. The largest of these trees, a gigantic one just off the porch and closest to the

Manor, Albert remembered as being Major Mastiff's favorite shade spot.

"Ahhh," Albert breathed deep of the keen country air. "The old Mastiff Oak, eh? Brings back recollections."

"Yes," Margot nodded pleasantly, narrowly missing a hedge on the side of the gravel drive. "Father will probably be out there sitting under it, waiting for us. He's had a stone bench built beneath it since the last time you were here."

Major Mastiff was, indeed, sitting on the stone bench beneath the Mastiff Oak, holding a tall, cool glass in his hand and waiting for them after they'd parked the station wagon.

Like the Mastiff Oak, Major Mastiff hadn't changed perceptibly since the last time Albert had seen him. Like the oak, he might have been a little bit more gnarled around the trunk, but otherwise he seemed the same. His blue eyes, hiding behind triplet pouches, were just as cold, just as blue, just as frostily appraising as they had been before. His white hair and well-trimmed white moustache still gave him an air of dignified, iron-fisted authority. Even the fact that he possessed a vast middle and waddled slightly as he rose to meet them, didn't detract from patrician austerity of Major Mastiff's appearance.

ALBERT extended his hand and smiled cheerfully, unable to still the pounding of his heart. He could never face the major without feeling that he was being examined by a Star Chamber tyrant.

"Hah," Major Mastiff said unyieldingly, ignoring young Addin's hand. "Hah, I see you're here, Addin!"

Albert gulped.

"Yes, arrived pronto, eh wot? Deuced nice of you to ask me up, Major. Especially after—"

Albert was about to say, "after what happened," but a nasty kick on the side of his shin from Margot warned him that there was no sense in probing old wounds. So he reddened uncomfortably and finished lamely, "Deuced nice and all that!"

Major Mastiff, after nodding and muttering something about persons with limited vocabularies, returned to his stone bench under the shade tree with the attitude of a man who has completed an unpleasant duty. Margot's tug on Albert's arm told him that the first encounter was at an end.

"Father's still a little touchy about you, Albert," Margot explained as they entered Mastiff Manor. "But you'll win him over completely before you leave. I'm sure you will."

Albert gulped.

"I can try, pet. I can only try."

They had paused in the center of the hallway of the Manor, and were immediately conscious of a shrill voice coming from atop a staircase to their left.

"Margot, Margot?"

Albert's recollection of Aunt Annabelle's buzz-saw tones gave him a sudden additional uncomfortable twinge, and unconsciously he braced himself.

"Yes Aunt Annabelle?" Margot trilled in reply.

"Have you been to the station to pick up that, that, that, pusillanimous pup yet?" Aunt Annabelle's voice came down.

"Aunt Annabelle!" Margot said sharply, face reddening. "Albert is here. He's with me now."

"Oh," Aunt Annabelle's voice floated back. There was no confusion or apology in her tone. Just the grim satisfaction of one who has made her position clear.

"He's brought you something that you'll like especially well, Aunt Anna-

belle," Margot said quickly.

"Bring it up!"

"His bags aren't unpacked yet, Aunt Annabelle. He'll give it to you at luncheon," Margot said, after Albert whispered to her, pointing to his still unpacked luggage.

Albert gulped deeply, running his finger beneath his now moist collar band. All told, his reception wasn't quite what he had expected it to be. However, old Major Mastiff hadn't turned an elephant gun on him as yet, and Aunt Annabelle didn't quite pour boiling oil down the staircase to greet his arrival. There was still life, so obviously there was room for hope.

Albert turned a wan face toward Margot.

"Heh," he observed, "they both seem to be a little frigid."

Margot beamed.

"Don't worry about Aunt Annabelle, darling. Once she has her hands on your present, she'll thaw out completely." Then, reverting to her role of hostess, Margot said: "It's eleven o'clock, now, and we'll be lunching pretty shortly. You'd better get up to your room so you'll have time to wash and unpack."

"Righto, pet. We'll take to the bat-tle as soon as I'm shipshape," Albert answered, planting an affectionate and somewhat damp kiss on her cheek. But as he trudged up the staircase toward the room Margot had told him he was to occupy, Albert Addin felt anything but jaunty. There was a queasy sensation in the pit of his stomach. A sensation caused not so much by the hostile attitude of Margot's kin, as by a peculiar premonition that hung over him like a gloomy pall. He couldn't explain this premonition to himself. The best he could do was endure it.

ALBERT ADDIN had unpacked, changed his travelworn attire, and

shaved by the time he got around to bringing forth Aunt Annabelle's gift from the grip in which he'd carried it. Now, gazing at it admiringly as he sat on the edge of the bed, Albert saw that it would make an even more delightful present to the old girl than he had first imagined.

Mentally, he patted himself on the back for having gotten the inspiration to bring it here. As a curio, Albert sensed, it was definitely something to look at. The scroll worked around the base of the lamp obviously bore ancient Arabian script.

Albert had seen pictures of these old lamps, but never the real McCoy. Consequently, he spent considerable time just sitting there, turning it over in his hands, and examining it. Vaguely, in the back of his brain, he was beginning to arrive at an explanation for its presence on the table in his suite at the Topper and Tennis Club. He recalled that a visiting East Indian rug salesman of no little wealth had occupied his suite before he moved in. Undoubtedly, the rug salesman had left it behind, although Albert could think of no reason for his doing so.

"Possibly," Albert mused, "he forgot to pack it when he left because it was invisible."

That seemed like a logical enough reason to Albert's extremely adaptable mind, so he let it go at that, continuing his study of the lamp. It was then that he noticed a slight scratch and a tiny smudge on the metallic surface of the curiosity. These flaws were obviously the result of Albert's having dropped it while it was still invisible.

Considering that it wouldn't be right not to give it to Aunt Annabelle looking—so to speak—at its best, Albert's hand automatically reached into his pocket and pulled forth a handkerchief. Wetting the handkerchief slightly with

the tip of his tongue, Albert applied a little elbow grease, a bit of deft polishing, to the tainted spots on the surface.

And precisely five seconds later, the room seemed to explode in one vast blinding splash of lightning!

ALBERT'S next awareness came as he looked dazedly around the bedroom from the position on the floor to which he had been hurled. His ears were ringing wildly, and the lamp was no longer in his grasp. Someone was helping him to his feet.

"Didn't hurtcha none, did I?" a voice was saying. "I ain't in practice on my entrances, but I'll get back in form on 'em pretty quick."

Albert looked up dazedly into the face of the speaker, into the face of the creature who was helping him to his feet. He saw, foggily, a huge, towering, hulking monstrosity of a man—a creature clad in what appeared to be the remnants of filthy, silken, yellow bedcovers. And as Albert gulped, too stunned to be amazed, he shook his head desperately to clear it of the faint pinwheels which were yet cluttering up his vision.

His eyes could focus, now the creature stepped back, giving Albert his first full view of him. And now Albert let out his first yelp of surprise.

The creature had an earnest, if somewhat vacant, face, his nose mashed like that of a pug who hadn't ducked soon or often enough. Albert suspected that the fellow's ears, which were hidden now beneath an incredible ragged and dirty turban, were probably cauliflowers. His arms were long, almost apelike, and his fingers dangled from his great hands like big bunches of bananas.

"Huuuullo," the monstrosity said, his voice having all the musical qualities of falling hardware.

Albert Addin took a deep breath.

"Who," he managed to say at last, "are you?"

The creature scratched his head.

"George," he answered a bit sheepishly. "My name is George, and I yam a genie." He smiled, then, in a friendly, though somewhat punchdrunk manner.

"George, a genie!" Albert was incredulously indignant. "Don't get wise, my man. Don't pull that stuff around here. Think you can come into people's rooms, bopping them on the back of the head and stealing valuable antiques, and get away with it all by the casual explanation that you're a genie? Oh no you don't. Albert Addin isn't a sucker. Never has been. Come clean, now, who in the devil are you, and what do you mean by coming bedsheeted into my room this way?"

The big fellow squirmed uncomfortably, and the trickle of a large tear started in the corner of one eye. "I yam what I yam. I can't help it none if I'm a genie, can I? And besides, yuh called me, didn'cha?"

The big fellow's attitude made it instantly apparent to Albert's shaken senses that, come what may, he could be talked out of any mayhem if handled with enough firmness.

"Don't slobber," Albert said, summoning all the brisk authority he could command. "I can't stand slobbering criminals!"

"But I yain't a criminal," George's husky voice was pleading. He shuffled his big feet frightenedly. "I yam just a genie, trying to do what I yam tol tuh do. Yuh called me, an'here I yam!"

ALBERT ADDIN suddenly spied the oriental lamp lying over in a corner of the bedroom where, evidently, the explosion had knocked it. Suddenly a horrible premonition assailed him and sweat broke out on his brow. Genie.

Genie. Lamp. The genie of the lamp. There was a lamp, and this hulk claimed to be a genie!

Albert had read the *Arabian Nights*.

But, no. Such things were impossible. This was an age of civili— Suddenly Albert recalled the fact that this lamp had been invisible when he'd first found it. He hadn't considered *that* impossible. But, of course, he hadn't considered invisibility impossible because the damned thing *had* been invisible, and that was that. Albert realized that his bewildered brain was chasing itself around in circles. He tried to get a grip on himself.

"Look now," he said determinedly. "You say you're a genie. Okay, then, prove it!"

Albert felt a surge of inner triumph as he saw the effect this demand had upon the creature who called himself George. The hulking fellow's features creased in a look of infinitely insulted reproach. His brows knotted. He appeared stumped by the question. He looked like a police dog who had just been asked to show his badge.

"Huh?" George managed.

"I said prove it," Albert repeated triumphantly. "Prove that you're a genie!"

"I yam, that's all," George declared with desperate intensity. "I yam a genie!"

"Prove it," Albert repeated his demand.

"What'll I do?" George muttered doggedly. "I yam a genie. Gimme somethin' what I should do fer yuh."

Albert's smile of triumph was almost satanical.

"Go jump in the lake," he sneered.

There was a sudden "pop", like the white splash of a flash bulb, and the gargantuan George was gone into thin air! Another "pop", before Albert could catch his startled breath, and

George stood once more before him in the bedroom—sopping wet, drenched to the skin!

Albert blinked.

"Wha—" he began.

"I jumped," George explained. "Brrrrr," he shook his soaked robes like a huge dog, "the lake's cold, and wet!"

Albert looked dazedly at the puddles around George's great feet. He blinked, looking up at George, struggling futilely for words.

"I kin do anything," George announced with shy pride, "anything at all."

Albert Addin was the sort of person who could harbor strong suspicions, nourish dogged doubts. But when you put the evidence before him he believed, instantly and without quibbling.

This was the case now. Albert was thunderstruck, but Albert believed. Implicitly. He had asked to be shown. He had been. Q.E.D.

"So you *are* a genie," Albert said at last. "Well I never—"

ALBERT left the sentence unfinished, while the cogs in his mental adaptation machine whirled frantically into gear to meet this new state of affairs. Albert would have an unearthly fear over the *possibility* that things like ghosts, or genies, existed. Like many people, it was the *unknown* that terrified him. But confronted with something that he *knew* to be true, Albert Addin was made of sterner stuff. He faced facts, met issues. Now he was doing both.

"So you're a genie," Albert said with some degree of calm. "Well, that's nice and all that, old boy. But really, I'm afraid you'll have to toddle along, go back to where you came from. There's no use for you here, old man. Can't use you, sorry." He made his

voice crisp, authoritative, and even waved his hand vaguely to round out his comments.

"But *yuh* called!" George, the genie, had a desperate, pleading note in his voice. There was a look in his bovine eyes that tore at the very fiber of Albert's heartstrings. "Yuh rubbed the lamp," the genie was going on, "didn'-cha?" He gulped. "Yuh can't call a guy fer a job, and then tell him there ain't none. Not after he ain't had no work in over a thousand years, *yuh* can't!"

In spite of himself, Albert felt like a man who has just slapped an orphan across its round little face.

"Over a thousand years?" he said incredulously. "Does Madame Perkins know about this?"

George, the genie, had tears in his eyes. His voice was a pleading croak. He'd removed his turban and was worrying it with his great paws, occasionally using it to dab at the corners of his moist eyes.

"Over a thousand years," he repeated. "Times has been tough, all over. Yuh ain't gonna send me back now, are *yuh*? Yuh wouldn't thrun me outta the foist job I get in over a thousand years, would *yuh*?"

Somewhere within the narrow confines of Albert Addin's breast, there was a warm and kindly heart. And now it was touched by a swift, wrenching surge of pity. He tried to make his expression a little bit more kindly, tried to think of something which he could say to soften the blow of the hulking monster.

But George, the genie, was continuing desperately, apparently aware that his new-found employer wanted none of him.

"Please, I kin do anything. Anything at all. Jest try me. Yuh seen how quick like I jumped into the lake, didn'-cha? There ain't nothing hardly

I can't do!"

Albert, feeling like a stern but kindly padre in a Spanish Mission movie, shook his head slowly.

"No. Sorry, old boy. Might think of you in the future. If you'll just fill out a blank and leave your name with the girl at the desk, I'll call you when anything comes up."

"Girl? Desk?" George was puzzled.

"A figure of speech," Albert informed him.

"I kin getcha any number of girls yuh might want," George said in sudden inspiration.

"No thanks," Albert was firm. "I have one."

"How about palaces?" George suggested hopefully. "Yuh want I should make yuh a palace? I kin make foist rate palaces!"

Albert shook his head again.

"There's nothing you can do for me, old man—as much as I'd like to help you out."

"Jools?" George inquired earnestly. "I kin getcha all sortsa jools. Rooooopies, dimunds, hatfullsa jools. Assorted sulectshums, if yuh like 'em better dat way!"

Albert wavered. Not at the declaration of power on George's part, but because of the infinite look of dog-like pleading in his bovine eyes.

"Frankly," George babbled on, "I need the woik. I got refrunces, too!"

ALBERT shook his head, then, with a start, looked at his watch. If was almost noon. He'd be late for luncheon if this lumbering lunkhead didn't remove himself pretty quickly. And suddenly, for the first time, Albert realized what a problem George would present if he were discovered by any of the Mastiffs or their servants!

"Look," Albert said, less kind, now and more anxious. "Why don't you

call again some time. I'm in a hurry. I've an appointment." Albert's brow was suddenly moist with the perspiration of worry.

"Yuh can't walk out without yuh should look at my refrunces," George pleaded desperately. He was digging deeply into his filthy bedsheets, yellow robes, and now his paw came forth clutching some yellowed parchments. He handed these over to Albert. "See, refrunces, past guys what employed me, and for what I worked good."

Automatically, and against his better judgment, Albert found himself accepting the yellowed parchments. They were obviously ancient, and in a dirty state of near decay. But the fine script on them was still legible. His eyes popped open wide as he peered at the script.

"Why," said Albert amazedly, "I can read this script. It's written in English!"

"Yeah," George nodded matter-of-factly. "It was writ by a magician who I last woiked for. He writ it in langwitch which is plain no matter what langwitch yuh speaks. Like my talk. Anybody understands it."

"I haven't time," said Albert as the shock left him somewhat. "You tell me what these references say and then please vanish, or something. I'm going to be late for luncheon, and I can't have you around!" Albert himself was growing a little desperate now.

George looked suddenly sheepish.

"I can't read so good," he admitted, reddening. "I never learnt. Always too busy."

"You mean," Albert was more amazed by this than by anything that had occurred so far, "you mean you're a genie and you can't read?"

George nodded.

"Me mudder made me get out an' woik when I was young. I never got

no educashun."

Albert glanced swiftly at the ancient script, the ancient script that read as modernly as a letter from one of his creditors.

"To who it may concern: This gargantuan son of a stupid camel is a menace to any right-minded employer. Earnest, yes. Willing, of course. But blundering—May Allah forgive the words I have in my mind for him! He is all thumbs. Everything he does is reckoned in ghastly blundering which leads to stupendous calamity. Do not hire this half-witted oaf. If he does not eat you out of house and home, he will see to it that your brow becomes the resting place for the demons of madness. I have made the lamp by which he can be summoned invisible—in the hope that it will never be found again, and that he will languish through time in the ranks of the unemployed. If, by any chance, you have penetrated the cloak of invisibility a round the lamp, and have summoned this lunk-headed lout, I can only wish you the patience and fortune of the Prophet.

Signed: Achmed Smith
President, Eastern Arabian
Magician's Union, Local 402"

There was a new look in Albert's eye as he turned from the letter to George, who stood watching him with a proudly sluggy smile, a look of a growing apprehension, the approaching desperation of fear.

"You say you can't read," Albert muttered. "And this note makes it obvious." He handed the parchment back to George, who replaced it tenderly beneath his filthy robes.

"There'd be only one thing I need badly," Albert mused. "That would be money, since I'm somewhat short now. However, that isn't up your alley.

The best favor you could do me," he went on, voice louder, "is to beat it, vanish, scram, like a nice fellow." Albert's voice was pleading in its last notes, coaxing. "I've got enough to straighten out, without you around. Now won't you go away, like a good fellow, for good?"

GEORGE suddenly stopped looking worried, snapped his fingers as if recalling something.

"I'll betcha yuh don't know it," he said exultantly.

"Know what?" Albert frowned.

"The command what makes me go away fer good, instead of on errands fer yuh," George said, now completely happy. "I'll betcha don't know it!"

"What is it?" Albert felt horribly like a man upon whom a trap has fallen. "What's the command?"

George grew coy.

"I don't know, honest." He gulped. "But I'm glad I don't know, 'cause now I kin woik fer yuh, huh?"

"Oh Lord," Albert groaned, knees suddenly weak.

There was a "pop" like the white flash of a photo bulb exploding. George was suddenly gone. Another "pop" and George was back. Albert blinked bewilderedly, frightenedly.

"Here, whatcha wanted. What I overheard yuh mention," George said ingratiatingly. And Albert was astonished to see a handful of green currency in the genie's paw!

Albert gulped. Money was money. Suddenly he felt that perhaps this wasn't going to be quite so bad, that perhaps George would not be able to cause too much d a m a g e by staying around a bit. He took the bills.

"Well," Albert muttered indecisively, "this makes things a bit different. Thanks, old man, I was a bit short. Maybe you don't have to leave right

away." Then, looking at his watch, he suddenly wheeled. "Almost late for luncheon," he gasped. "Have to hurry. Try to be of some use around here while I'm gone. Get some wood for the fireplace. Be sort of a handy man, will you? We'll talk things over when I come back. But mind you, don't go running loose around here!"

Then, turning, Albert hastily stepped out of the room. Once again his mental adjustment gears were stripping themselves to mesh in with this new light in which he now viewed George, the genie. And, as usual, the adaptation was working with brisk smoothness.

It was just as well for Albert's new state of mind in regard to George, that he didn't see the hulking genie turn and gaze thoughtfully around the room after the door closed. For George's gaze was fixed most strongly on the barren fireplace and the empty wood box beside it.

CHAPTER III

George Goes to Work

IT WAS with mingled feelings that Albert Addin entered the oak-ceilinged dining room of Mastiff Manor. He was still pondering the amazing antics of George, the genie, who had popped into his existence so unceremoniously. His common sense bade him to accept such blessings without quibbling as to their source, but something else, possibly a sixth sense, seemed to be trying to warn him of impending disaster. If that scroll were right—

With a shrug of his well-tailored shoulders, he dismissed the matter altogether. Which was thoroughly typical. When anything bothered him to the extent that it made him think there was only one result, it was consigned to oblivion.

He slid into a chair to the right of Major Mastiff, conscious that he was late for luncheon by several minutes. The major was breathing heavily, which Albert knew, was a very bad sign.

"Terribly sorry," Albert apologized charmingly, "but I lost all track of time while I was looking out the window at your beautiful estate. It's absolutely remarkable, Major, the way you keep it up. Absolutely remarkable."

The major sniffed, somewhat mollified, and Albert smiled happily at Margot. She smiled back, warmly and admiringly.

Aunt Annabelle cleared her throat decisively. Her long face was set sternly and her uncompromising eyes regarded him suspiciously.

"You spoke of a present," she said in an unpleasantly business-like voice, "did you forget that too in your temptation of nature's wonders?"

Albert swallowed suddenly. Hang it, he was in the soup now. He had utterly failed to realize that he simply couldn't give Aunt Annabelle the lamp now. Something deeper than instinct told him that Aunt Annabelle and George would not get along.

"Ha, ha," he laughed weakly, "joking, always joking, aren't you, Auntie, old bean?"

Aunt Annabelle set her lips in distaste. "Don't call me that," she said frigidly, "and I wasn't joking. I never joke."

"That's right," Albert stalled desperately for time, "you don't. Just the other day we were talking about jokes down at the club and I said that in my opinion you—"

"About the present," Aunt Annabelle interrupted quietly but firmly, "you were saying?"

"Well you see," Albert struggled on manfully, "I—I knew how you liked surprises so I—I decided to wait until

this evening and, and really surprise you."

"I detest surprises," Aunt Annabelle said grimly.

"You'll love this one, though," Albert almost choked with the desperate heartiness he put into his voice.

Aunt Annabelle attacked her cutlet savagely and did not bother to reply. It was obvious, Albert thought gloomily, that the old girl still cherished her violent prejudice toward him.

Except for this, the first part of the meal rambled along smoothly enough. Albert was beginning to breathe easily by the time the lemon pudding was served, but before he could sink a spoon into the dessert, there was a loud cry from the hall, and the next instant a red-faced, overalled figure burst into the dining room.

ALBERT recognized him as Jeakes, the gardener, a quaint, highly-tempered old gentleman.

Jeakes puffed furiously for an instant, and then strode to Major Mastiff's chair. His small blue eyes were protruding like marbles and his face was stained a dull vermillion from the top of his collar to the roots of his white hair.

"I queet," he shouted suddenly, "I queet. I am through. Finished for good. Geeve me my money and I leave. I work here no more. "Ze new gardener he ees—"

"Now, now Jeakes," Major Mastiff interrupted testily, "what's the meaning of this? What's all this nonsense about a new gardener?"

"Ze new gardener," Jeakes cried in a shrill voice, "he is here already. I hope you are satisfied. Ze beeg bafoon has destroyed ze Mastiff Oak. You hear? He has cut down the Mastiff Oak. I queet. I am through. Zat tree she ees like a baby to me and now

she is gone."

Major Mastiff's face had drained of all color as Jeakes spoke. His large puffy body began to quiver.

"Jeakes," he cried hoarsely, "y—you've been drinking. You must be. The Mastiff Oak it—it—" Major Mastiff's voice trailed away to an inaudible whisper. His breath came faster as he rose unsteadily from his chair. He turned, almost automatically, and moved heavily toward the door.

"I'll see," he muttered, "I'll see."

Albert winced. He knew the danger signals. He could tell from the angry red that circled the major's neck that the great-grand-daddy of all Mastiff temper storms was brewing.

But Albert knew that his skirts were clear. He knew that he would not be the victim of the latest Mastiff upheaval, so he relaxed comfortably, almost happy in the realization that some other poor chump was in for it this time. There were few things dearer to the major's rock-like heart than his beautiful shade tree, Mastiff Oak. If someone had been idiotic enough to have it chopped down, that someone would regard being boiled in oil as a light penance after the major got through with him.

Albert's pleasant musings were disrupted by the sounds of a commotion outside the dining room door. He heard the major's voice raised in stormy wrath, and the next instant he strode back into the room, dragging behind him a sulky lumbering figure, dressed in yellow silk and carrying a large business-like axe in his hands.

Albert's eyes popped open, and his stomach turned a slow nauseating flip-flop. For the figure with the major was George, the genie!

THE major churned across the rug like a battleship and stopped in

front of Albert. A finger the size of a banana shot out and wagged in front of the Addin nose.

"As usual," the major said in a hoarse, strangled voice, "I find myself coming to you for explanations when something ghastly and unnatural occurs. This man," the major paused to glare at George, "says he is your genjin—I guess he means your valet." The major's cheeks were the color of ripe beets now and his voice had sunk to a hissing whisper. "Answer me Addin, is this—this creature your valet?"

Albert swallowed nervously.

"You might say he is," he said weakly.

The major mopped his brow and struggled for composure.

"I am glad to know that," he said at last, "I am glad to know that he *is* your valet. For I want you to answer a little question for me, Mr. Addin. That is," the major was icily polite, "if you don't mind."

Albert liked none of this. The major was breathing like a runaway locomotive, and his frosty blue eyes were glaring at him as if he were something that had been caught crawling from the woodwork.

"You don't mind, do you?" The major's voice was rising in pitch and volume.

Albert looked at George. George was shifting from one big foot to the other in obvious embarrassment and misery. Aunt Annabelle, Albert was aware, was taking in the scene in undisguised satisfaction. Margot was staring miserably at her plate and wringing the napkin she held in her hands. Albert's gaze came unwillingly back to Major Mastiff. He attempted an ingratiating smile.

"Ha, ha," he laughed unconvincingly, "do I get twenty silver dollars if I

answer it correctly?"

The major's cheeks swelled up into miniature balloons.

"Tell me," he bellowed suddenly and wildly, "why your valet chopped down Mastiff Oak?"

The words bounced and echoed from the oaken rafters to the solid pine floor like the sound of doomsday itself. Albert's heart would have popped out his mouth had he not clamped his teeth together. He stared in horror from the major to George and in George's eyes he saw—guilt. So that was it! George had chopped down the tree and the major naturally thought that he, Albert, was responsible for it. Albert breathed easier. A simple explanation, brisk and to the point, and the whole thing would be cleared up.

"Major Mastiff," he began formally, "I—"

He stopped as he saw George tugging at the sleeve of the major's coat. The major wheeled.

"In Heaven's name," he bellowed, "what do you want, you gibbering half-wit?"

"He told me to do it," George pointed at Albert, "he told me that he wanted some kindling."

"Oh he did!" The major's voice was like a condor's scream. He turned to Albert, breathing through his nose. "I should have known better," he cried hoarsely, "I invited you here against my better judgment. You are an irresponsible, unreliable, thoroughly incompetent moron. You have descended from a long line of the same. You are a destructive, brainless spendthrift. You are—"

"But, Major," Albert interrupted desperately. He knew the cards were stacked against him but he had to make some case for himself. George had utterly and hopelessly betrayed him. He *had* mentioned something about

kindling, but not a word had passed the Addin lips to the effect that forest heirlooms were to be destroyed to accomplish the purpose.

"If you are not off the grounds by five o'clock," the major cried wrathfully, "I'll set the dogs on you. If I ever see you in my daughter's company again I'll hunt you down with my elephant gun and blow you into six-hundred pieces. I've had enough. In the future, if you speak to me or my family, you do it at your own risk. Do I make myself clear?"

"By reading between the lines," Albert said morosely, "I get what you're hinting at. You don't really want my autograph then?"

With an anguished bleat Major Mastiff wheeled and staggered blindly from the room. George, Albert noticed grimly, had disappeared too.

AUNT ANNABELLE rose from the table with stiff dignity and, with a frigid, disapproving glance in Albert's direction, retired from the room. Margot remained at the table, crying softly into her handkerchief.

Albert sat down beside her.

"That does it," he sighed ruefully, "I haven't learned the knack yet of creeping into the old boy's heart. I'd better start to pack." He looked tenderly at Margot's elfin profile and patted her softly on the shoulder.

"For old time's sake," he said fervently, "will you be a good girl and slip the shells from the old boy's elephant gun?"

Margot stopped sniffing and looked at him, determination in her eye.

"You're not going to pack," she said firmly "just go to your room and wait. I'm going to have a try at softening father up."

"How do you go about it?" Albert asked with professional interest. "Do

you use something hard like a baseball bat or does something blunt and dull do the trick?"

"Silly," Margot smiled. "I find two blue eyes and four large tears more effective than anything else."

"I'll wait upstairs," Albert said dubiously. "If you fail, try and give me a few minutes warning. Your father would appreciate a moving target, I think. And I can promise you I would really move."

Margot squared her small jaw stubbornly.

"I'll swing him around. I'm almost sure of it. I'm going to convince him you aren't as bad as he thinks you are. You go to your room and wait there for me. I'll beard father in his den."

Albert kissed her fondly. "You brave, brave girl," he said admiringly.

SOME minutes later Albert slipped quietly into his room. He had little hope of Margot changing her father's mind and so, with the caution of the Addin clan, he intended to get things ready for a speedy departure.

His room, he discovered then, was not unoccupied. Squatting on the floor was George, the genie, and another individual dressed in a white apron and a chef's hat. Stacks of greenbacks were piled before this latter chap, and Albert heard the musical click of ivory cubes as they bounced across the floor.

The cook scrambled to his feet as Albert entered.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said breathlessly, "but me and your man was just indulgin' in a harmless game of dice, sir. I was just taking my leave, sir, as you came in."

"Then take it," Albert said, "and take your winnings too. I want to talk to my man alone. If I should decide to draw and quarter him I wouldn't want anyone around to stop it."

The cook stooped and stuffed several thick wads of currency into his pockets and then left the room hurriedly.

"Before we get down to the important things," Albert said darkly, "I'd like to know where you got all that money you lost?"

George beamed broadly.

"Sure, Boss. I'll show yuh. Yuh seemed to like dat green stuff I got yuh dis morning so I went back and got some more of it. I yam only trying to be a good genie."

Albert considered the matter thoughtfully.

"So you just went back and got some more eh?" he asked quietly.

"Yup," George answered hesitantly.

"Where did you go?" Albert asked patiently.

"To a place," George answered brightly, "to a place where they got it."

Albert settled down in a chair and crossed his knees carefully. He lighted a cigarette and blew a cloud of blue smoke toward the ceiling. Somehow, it seemed desperately important to him to do these unimportant things deliberately and methodically. George stood before him, his face a mixture of anxiety and fear.

"Have you got any more of this stuff?" Albert asked casually.

"Yup," George's voice was happy and hopeful, "I brung lots of it cause I thought youse would like it."

Albert had a temporary siege of dizziness, but it passed, leaving him outwardly calm, but inwardly shaking.

"Where is it?" he managed to ask.

George was smiling broadly.

"I knew yuh would like it," he said relieved. "I yam glad 'cause I only want to do things yuh will like."

"That is very touching," Albert said, with a bit of irritation, "but please tell me where the rest of the stuff is."

"Oh sure," George said anxiously.

He stepped to the closet door and jerked it open.

ALBERT sucked in his breath sharply, jolted completely from his affected calm and indifference. For the closet was literally stuffed full of bundle after bundle of crisp, green banknotes!

Piled six feet from the floor, they formed a column fully two feet square.

"There must be," Albert thought with a sickening gasp, "millions on millions of dollars cached in that closet!"

"George," he gasped weakly, "where did you get this stuff?"

"From the place," George answered proudly, "from the place wit all the steel bars and cages. I found all this stuff down in de basement in a big vault. I just took all I could see. Why? Ain'tcha glad?"

"No," moaned Albert, "I am not glad. This is stolen property. I'll go to jail for grand larceny, and by the time I get out I'll have whiskers down to my knees."

"Don'cha like whiskers," George asked solicitously.

Albert sighed helplessly.

"No," he said, with a quiet prayer for patience, "I don't like whiskers."

Before George could reply there was a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Albert asked, heart hammering wildly in sudden guilt.

"It's me. Margot."

Albert slammed the closet door shut.

"Coming dear!" he sang out. He shoved George into the bathroom and closed the door on his bewildered, wounded countenance. "Right away dear!" he cried with false heartiness. He hurried across the room then, throwing open the door. Margot was in the hallway, a mischievous smile dancing in her eyes.

"The elephant gun," she announced

solemnly, "has been hung back on the wall and all the cartridges removed."

"Darling," Albert cried unbelievably, "it's too good to be true!"

"You're forgiven," Margot said seriously, "but you must be on your best behavior from now on. Father is still furious but he's willing to let bygones be bygones."

"Very sporting of the old boy," Albert said cheerfully. "I'll be the model young man for the rest of my stay."

"Since you're staying," Margot said resolutely, "I'll help you unpack. The closet in this room is in a frightful state. It should have been straightened out before you arrived, but we can attend to it now." She smiled up at him. "It'll be kind of fun working together won't it? As if it were our own place."

Albert smiled down at her and wondered how such an angel could actually be in love with him. "Come in, darling," he said blissfully, "we'll pitch right into it, clean things up in—"

His voice choked off in his throat as one appalling thought suddenly struck him. The closet was packed with ill-gotten currency of the realm. He would be branded a vicious bank robber while his promises to be on his best behavior were still echoing through the room!

"No, no," he cried, "you can't go in there!"

WHY, ALBERT," Margot stared at him in amazement. "What do you mean?"

"I—I mean," Albert thought desperately, "I won't have you lowering yourself. That's what I mean. I—I'll do the work, er, after you've gone. I don't want you soiling those little white hands of yours. What kind of a man do you think I am anyway?"

"Oh, Albert," Margot laughed, "that is sweet of you. But it's also very

silly. I don't mind the work a bit. And it simply has to be done. So let's get busy."

"No," Albert cried frantically, "you don't understand, Margot! You really mustn't go into this closet. This is very serious, dear, and I wish you would respect my wishes."

"Albert," Margot said worriedly, "you're acting awfully strange."

Albert thought frantically.

"My aunt was killed from overwork," he lied brazenly, "and since that day I can't bear to see any woman working. I've never told you—but now you know how I feel."

"You never told me about your aunt," Margot said suspiciously. "I understood that you didn't have any."

"Life's little surprises," Albert said inanely. "Variety is the spice of things y'know. Aunt Agatha was a great old girl. She used to shovel coal, split wood, haul ice, take care of the horses. Indispensable type y'know. But the strain told on her and just before her ninetieth birthday she passed away. We all missed her terribly. The horses most of all. So that's how it is. Till this day I can't bear to see the weaker sex putting their nose to the wheel as it were."

He took her by the arm and led her to the door.

"I'll take care of the closet," he said blithely. "Pip! Pip!"

"You *are* completely crazy," she murmured. "It's a wonder I put up with you at all. I'll leave, for you obviously want me to, but don't forget dinner at six. It's your last chance to prove to father that you haven't got squirrel blood in you."

"But I have," Albert pointed out solemnly, before he closed the door.

"Why didn'tcha let her in the closet?" George's voice, perplexed and unhappy, sounded behind him.

Albert turned wearily.

"You wouldn't understand George," he said, sighing. "It's very involved."

"Would it fix things," George asked intently, "if I wuz to fill *all* the closets up with that green stuff?"

"No!" Albert shouted. His patience was fraying fast. "Why don't you leave me alone? You bother me. You give me a pain in the neck."

"You—you mean that?" George asked sorrowfully.

"Certainly," Albert snapped.

"Okay," George sighed. "I don't like to do it but I yam only trying to please."

The genie waved one hand in the air slowly and Albert felt a sudden sharp pain flash up his back to his neck.

"Ouch," he yelled. "What the devil are you doing?"

George looked bewilderedly apologetic.

"You told me to give you a pain in the neck," he said stubbornly. "I yam only doing what I yam told."

"All right, all right," Albert said desperately. "Get a towel and some hot water."

IT TOOK George the rest of the afternoon to massage Albert's neck back to its customary limberness and well-being. By the time the job was done Albert had to break all speed records in clambering into his evening clothes. It wouldn't do to be late for dinner tonight, of all nights. The old boy would simply scalp him without any preliminaries at all.

"Stay up here in the room," he warned George before he left. "Keep out of trouble. If I need anything I'll come back up."

George nodded understandingly, quiet pleased that Albert was entrusting such valuable orders to him.

Albert hurried to the library. Aunt Annabelle was there with Margot. Major Mastiff was standing before the

fireplace talking to two strangers dressed in conservative grey suits. They looked up as Albert entered. Major Mastiff turned and glared into the fire, leaving Margot to handle the introductions.

"Albert," she said somewhat uneasily, "these gentlemen are government agents. They're down here to investigate a very baffling robbery that occurred at the town bank some time today."

Albert swallowed suddenly. His heart began to leap at his ribs like an imprisoned rabbit.

"V-very glad to know you," he stammered. One of the agents was heavy and dark and a Smith. The other was light and fair and a Jones. They shook hands firmly.

"U-unexpected pleasure," Albert assured them lamely, "did you say you were down here on a bank robbery?"

The Smith answered:

"Yes. As a matter of fact we've traced the notes to this locality. It seems Major Mastiff's cook spent a good deal of money this afternoon in the village tavern and when we checked on the bills we discovered them to be those which were stolen from the bank this morning. We hurried here but it seems the bird has flown the coop. The cook didn't return from the village so he's probably miles away from here by this time."

Albert was perspiring profusely. He remembered all too well that the cook had won the banknotes from George after lunch. Here the tireless wolves of the law were sniffing around and a closet full of incriminating bills was directly over their heads.

"Too bad about the cook," he murmured half-heartedly. "I suppose he's gone for good now," he added hopefully.

"Not at all," the Jones answered,

laughing. "We'll have him in custody in twenty-four hours. And when we do we'll find out who his confederates are in short order."

Margot interrupted to ask the officers to stay for dinner and Albert slumped into a chair, his strength slipping away from him. All hope was dead now. He might just as well give up gracefully and pray that they'd assign him to something light, like sweeping out the prison library.

SO IMMERSED in his own gloomy thoughts was Albert, that he did not notice the slightly frantic discussion going on between the major, Aunt Annabelle and Margot. He didn't look up until he heard the major's voice. It wasn't just the major's voice that snapped him from his reverie, it was the apologetic tone in it that electrified him.

He peered up and saw that the major was speaking to the two government agents.

"I am completely desolated," the major was saying humbly. "Never in all the years I have been head of Mastiff Manor have we been placed in such a humiliating position. Our hospitality, sir, is a watchword in this part of the country and it pains us most grievously to be forced to admit that the absence of our cook makes it impossible for us to ask you to dine with us. Not for forty years has it been necessary for us to turn anyone from our door. The bitter necessity that forces us to do so now is deeply regretted by all of us. I am more miserable, sirs, than my words convey. All I can hope for is your understanding and forgiveness."

"Well," Albert said practically, "maybe they can come out with us, and we'll rustle up something. Bread and butter and coffee wouldn't be too hard to take right now."

"*Bread and butter!*" the major

echoed stridently, "are you mad? And do you have the unmitigated gall to suggest that Mastiff guests retire to the scullery to prepare their own foods?"

"I'm afraid I did," Albert said nervously. "I just forget myself sometimes, major. Pay no attention to me."

"I never have," the major snapped frostily.

Margot sat down beside Albert.

"Don't antagonize father," she whispered. "He's terribly sensitive about the Mastiff reputation for hospitality. If you could do something to save the day, Albert, you'd win him over completely for life."

"What could I do?" Albert asked helplessly. "I might try wishing hard and snapping my fingers, but that never does work."

He brooded darkly for several seconds and then, like a bolt of lightning, a marvelous idea popped into his head.

George, the genie, could handle this situation!

If George could fix things up, he, Albert, could take the credit and he'd be in solid with the old duck for the duration.

He patted Margot's hand reassuringly, and then he strode from the library and took the steps two at a time. He plunged into his room without knocking and found George sleeping comfortably in the armchair.

He shook him roughly, but it was several minutes before George opened his eyes and regarded him sleepily.

"Whatcha want?" he grunted.

"I got a job for you," Albert said enthusiastically, "a big job that will really try you out. Want to take a crack at it?"

George straightened up with alacrity.

"Gosh, this is what I've been waiting for," he gasped happily. "Whatcha want?"

"A banquet," Albert explained, "for

six people. All the trimmings. Wine, food, everything that goes with it."

George was beaming happily now.

"That wuz my specialty in the old days," he said excitedly. "I'll fix you up like I used to for my old pal, the Sultan."

"Good," Albert n o d d e d approval. "Don't let me down now, this means a lot to me. I'm going downstairs and tell them to tie their napkins on tight. Then you can wave the magic wand and we'll eat."

"Yup, that's right," George grinned expectantly. "I can't wait to get started again. Today I yam going to be a man."

ALBERT winked at him in conspiratorial conviviality and then whistling happily, strode from the room and down the winding flight of stairs that led to the library.

"The crisis is past," he announced with jovial loudness as he strode into the library, "food is on the way. Food, fit for a king. The Mastiff banner is again flying high before a headwind of delightful aromas. The Mastiff honor is saved. We eat royally and sumptuously. The motto of Mastiff Manor shall always be: Eat to your heart's content and you'll find bicarbonate of soda on the first shelf to the right."

"Oh Albert," Margot cried, "did you really arrange for something?"

"Listen, you congenital ass," barked Major Mastiff, "I will not tolerate any more of your damfoolishness. If you have provided for a suitable repast, I am willing to admit that my judgment of you might have been somewhat premature. But if this is another of your moronic attempts at humor I shall—"

The major broke off in the middle of the sentence—listening!

Everyone else in the room, including Albert, turned toward the double doors

that led to the library—listening!

"W-what is it?" Margot asked nervously.

"Music," Albert gulped. "J—just music."

It was music, but strange, compelling, sensuous music that trilled sweetly through the room, growing in intensity and volume every second!

Before another word could be spoken, four huge, turbaned figures moved slowly into the room. In their hands they held reedlike musical instruments, with which they produced the weird, hauntingly beautiful music that was filling the room.

"I say!" gasped Major Mastiff.

Following the musicians came eight young men bearing large trays of steaming, delightfully fragrant foods. They placed the trays on the floor, forming a semi-circle with them and then they backed to the wall where they remained motionless.

Albert was beginning to comprehend. This was the banquet! George was really outdoing himself on this job. He turned and smiled smugly at the major who was staring at the food in open consternation.

"Wasn't much," he said condescendingly to him, "just a little something I whipped up myself."

But the procession had not ended. Husky, brown skinned attendants came next, carrying huge trays brimming with glittering, sparkling, indescribably gorgeous gems of all descriptions.

"Well, well," Albert murmured, "very, very pretty."

"Very, very pretty," the government agent, named Smith, said in a hard, precise voice, "very pretty indeed. Also very indiscreet."

Before Albert could glean the meaning from this cryptic remark, another part of the procession arrived. A part which caused a sharp, shocked exclama-

tion from Margot, and a gasp of pure dismay from Aunt Annabelle.

Albert looked, and his knees turned to rubber. For the room was filling with dozens and dozens of scantily clad dancing girls, who were wriggling and undulating their extremely provocative torsos to the pagan piping of the turbaned musicians!

THEY were gorgeous, lushly beautiful creatures, with black lustrous hair and dark coquettish eyes that flashed slyly about the room. Their bodies were divinely fashioned and, except for a few insignificant wisps of lace, almost completely unclad.

"So," Margot cried, "this is your idea of good, clean entertainment, is it? These creatures, these hussies, you think they're just wonderful, don't you? Well I'm glad I found out about you before we were married, *Mr. Addin.*"

"Darling," Albert choked, "I had nothing to do with any of this. You don't understand. You don't—"

"I understand perfectly," Margot cut in witheringly. She turned to Aunt Annabelle, who after her first shock had worn off, was staring in undisguised envy at the dancing girls. "Are you coming, Aunt Annabelle?" Margot asked in a perfectly calm voice.

"Y—yes," Aunt Annabelle said flushed. She strode past Albert, drawing her skirts slightly to one side as she passed him, and the two women left the room, arm in arm.

"Amazingly irregular occurrence," the major muttered, as if he doubted whether any of it had actually occurred or not.

"Very irregular," the government agent snapped. "So irregular that we're going to hold you, Major Mastiff, until we find out what the customs inspector has to say about this contraband jewelry. Not to mention the possibility

that these aliens might have been illegally smuggled into this country."

"Hold me?" the major bleated. "Why that's preposterous. Utterly ridiculous."

"Nevertheless we're going to do it. Dick," one agent snapped to the other, "search this house from top to bottom. There may be more loot lying around here!"

"You blithering nincompoop," the major raged at Albert, "this whole blasted affair is your fault!"

"Tut, tut," Albert said reprovingly, "that's not the attitude for the condemned man to take. I wouldn't say too much either till you've talked to your attorney."

"You blasted—" Major Mastiff finished the sentence in a growl.

The G-man stepped to the major's side and snapped a handcuff on his wrist. "Now relax," he said, as the major began to resist, "this is just a precaution." He snapped the other end of the cuff to the arm of a heavy chair.

The dancing girls were milling around uncertainly and, together with the food bearers and the jewel bearers, they formed quite a noisy crowd. The musicians had stopped their music and were staring vaguely about, like men gazing at unfamiliar scenes. The jewels and the food and the bales of silks and satins were piled helter-skelter in the middle of the floor. Everyone was present, Albert thought worriedly, but George, the creator, so to speak, of all this confusion.

Albert strolled back to the chair where Major Mastiff was cuffed.

"Sorry about this," he said cheerfully, "but it's not too bad. With luck you'll get off with five or ten years."

"Leave me alone," Major Mastiff shrilled impotently.

The other G-man returned to the room, an atmosphere of suppressed excitement showing in his face. He whis-

pered a few terse words to his fellow officer, then the two of them turned, suddenly grabbed Albert firmly by the arms.

"No tricks," one warned, "we found the banknotes in your closet. All accounted for except those you bribed the cook with."

BEFORE Albert could raise his voice to protest, he found himself handcuffed to the same chair that the major was linked to.

"This is an outrage," he sputtered, "I didn't steal that money."

"You can tell that to our inspector," the Smith replied. "This thing is getting a little too big for us to handle. We're going to phone the village, and in half an hour the case will be out of our hands. Our inspector is waiting there for our report and when we phone him the dope you can be sure he'll be right out."

The Smith found the phone in the dining room and in a few minutes they could hear his excited voice floating out to them.

"Yeah, Chief, it's on the level. We've recovered the banknotes and we've discovered a lot of jewels and silks and stuff that looks as if it might have been slipped in illegal. Also there's about two dozen dancing girls and a lot of oriental musicians and—what chief? No I haven't been drinking. I haven't touched a drop. Honest. They're all here . . . O.K. We'll be expecting you then. . . . Good-bye.

The Smith re-entered the room and at the same second, from the opposite door, George, the genie, looking haggard and disillusioned, entered.

Albert turned to Major Mastiff.

"I hope," he said critically, "that you'll make an interesting cell-mate."

"Bahhhh," growled the Major, "this is a lot of ridiculous tommy-rot."

"Yes," Albert said softly, "but have you figured out how you're going to explain all this?" His hand described a graceful circle that included the dancers, musicians and gems and silks.

Major Mastiff was silent for some minutes. Then he shook his head slowly and despairingly.

"No," he said, "I haven't."

"I've got an idea," Albert said hopefully, "but we've got to get that big baboon that just came in to cooperate with us."

George was moving toward them, a woe-begone expression on his face. He slumped down in a chair opposite them and stared moodily at his large feet.

G-man Jones looked at him suspiciously.

"Who're you?" he asked.

"He's my valet," Albert said quickly.

"Don't get too close to those guys," Jones warned George and then he turned away. He fumbled in his pocket for an instant and then he turned back. "Got a cigarette?" he asked George.

George handed a pack to him.

"Mind if I take a couple for my partner?" Jones asked.

George nodded dully and in a few seconds a blue wreath of sweetish smoke was wafting ceiling-ward from the cigarettes of the two officers.

"George," Albert said desperately, "you've got to get us out of this jam. It's all your fault, you know."

"What kin I do?" George asked.

"Pip! Pip!" Albert said for moral effect. "Just a wave of the palm, a snap of the finger and send all these people back where they came from. Simple and neat."

George shook his huge head glumly.

"I can't, I yam not a genie. I yam a blundering, nonsensical s-something else."

"Who told you that?" Albert asked uneasily.

"The old lady," George said moodily, "I yam not a genie. I never was, I guess. Everything I do goes wrong. I yam a flop, I guess."

"Aunt Annabelle," Albert said bitterly, "has been giving you her version of the pat on the back."

"I met her in the hall," George said thickly, "and I told her I was a genie. She said I wuzn't. She said I wuz drunk, and a loud mouth and a non-sensical something else. I feel terrible. I yam never going to pretend I yam a genie again."

"You weren't pretending," Albert said frantically, "you were a genie, you *are* a genie, and now you've got to help us, you've simply got to! It's getting late, George. You've got to do something."

George shook his head slowly but decisively. "I wuz a fake, that's what I wuz. That must have been why I wuz never given my union card."

THINGS were whirring about in Albert's head. "If this goes on much longer," he thought wildly, "I shall go completely mad." Here they were, in a neat air-tight mess, and every second brought more police and more witnesses to the scene. The only person who might extricate them was George. And George, the stupid lumbering hod, was not going to cooperate. Albert cursed the psychological quirk that had given George an inferior complex, made him susceptible to Aunt Annabelle's uncomplimentary tirade.

Albert frowned deeply and buried his head in his hands. The whole thing was maddening. Psychology, psychology, that was the trouble. Psychology—! Maybe the solution was in psychology!

His head jerked up from his hands. George was still slumped in the chair, a picture of dejection.

"George," he said, "I believe Aunt Annabelle was right. You're not a genie at all. You're a fake, through and through." If Albert was expecting a show of temper he was somewhat disappointed.

George nodded glumly.

"Like I wuz telling you, I yam only a fake."

"Sure," Albert said bitterly, "You're just a common fraud, a cheap magician—"

"I yam not," George said firmly.

"You certainly are," Albert was equally emphatic, "you're just a clever magician."

"I yam not a magician," George said stoutly, "I yam a—I yam a . . ." his voice trailed off sheepishly and he finished lamely, "not a magician."

"You are a magician," Albert said quietly. "I know because, because I am a genie."

George looked up quickly this time.

"Haw, haw," he said, "that's funny. I'll betcha can't fly a flying carpet."

An idea was growing in Albert's head. He fished in his vest pocket and when his fingers touched a tiny package there, he breathed a silent prayer. It was some flashlight powder that he intended using in shooting some night groups. There was friendly, crackling fire in the grate that would serve his purpose.

"Look," he shouted suddenly, "see if you can do anything half as difficult." As he finished speaking he shot out his arm in the direction of the fire, tossing the package of flashlight powder into the fire. It blazed up in a great white flame, with a muffled ominous sound. Smoke, billowing white clouds of it, poured from the chimney. Albert waved his hand again and the fire seemed to settle back to normal.

George was somewhat impressed.

"Perty good," he said.

"Not hard," Albert said modestly.

"Not for a genie anyway."

George sat up in his chair.

"I'll show yuh I ain't no ordinary magician," he said grimly. He looked about the room, looked up at the shining chandelier, gleaming with dozens of electric lights. With a stupidly happy smile he snapped his fingers. Instantly, magically, the bulbs disappeared, were replaced by long, quietly burning candles.

One of the officers came over then. There seemed to be something wrong with his feet. He stumbled twice before he reached George's side.

"That's a pretty clever trick," he said with some difficulty. "Got any more cigarettes, Bud? What kind are they anyway?"

George handed him the pack.

"Hasheesh," he answered.

Albert swallowed suddenly, but the government agents were already lighting up again. Albert peered at the clock. In a matter of minutes the Inspector would be here and then their goose was cooked. He turned back to George.

"I've got one, now, that only a genie can do."

GEORGE opened his eyes, thoroughly interested.

Albert pointed to the curious musicians, the dancing girls, the food bearers, the trays of food and gems.

"I'm going to send all that back where it came from," he announced matter-of-factly. "On top of that I'm going to send back all the green stuff up in the closet to where it came from, at the same time. You'll admit that that's quite a job, won't you?"

George was frowning now with what might be professional envy.

Albert waved his hand around his head and then shouted out his college yell. When the hideous noise ceased

echoing, Albert slumped into his chair, and stared at the openly disapproving musicians and dancers.

"Well," he said, "didn't make it, did I?" He peered slyly at George. This was the nub of his scheme. "Now you try it, George."

Just then there came a loud authoritative knocking on the door.

Major Mastiff groaned.

"The police! Everything is over!"

George stood up.

"I'll let 'em in," he said cheerfully, "I like answering the door." He turned and headed toward the front door.

Albert felt a wave of bitterness and gall wash over him.

"Magician!" he sang out bitterly.

George wheeled, flushing angrily.

"I'll show youse!" His big fingers snapped like a cracking limb. There was a blinding flash and when Albert blinked his eyes and opened them again the room was empty, except for the two befuddled officers, Major Mastiff and himself!

"Eureka!" Albert shrieked, and then, from sheer relief he fainted away. . . .

IT seemed ages later when Albert woke and opened his eyes. George's moon-like face was peering solicitously down at him. "Are the Cossacks gone?" he asked feebly.

"All gone," George said bewilderedly.

Albert sat up, beaming broadly. "Pip! Pip!" he chortled, "tell me everything that happened. I can guess most of it, but I still want to hear it."

"The officer wuz real mad," George said solemnly, "when he got here and didn't find nobody but his two men sleeping in the corner. Hully gee, he called them a lot of names and then he had them carried out to his car. He wuz real sorry you wuz bothered and he wanted me to tell you that."

(Concluded on page 127)

The Man From the Future

by **DON WILCOX**

Would a man from the future like living in our world? The answer is, he wouldn't! But here he was, from 10,950 A.D.!

DON'T get me wrong. This guy didn't lift the street-car by himself. A dozen other fellows were heaving, and the truck that had bumped the thing off its tracks a couple of minutes before was tugging at a taut log-chain.

But it was this big innocent tan-cheeked fellow in the soft gray top-coat and hat that really muscled the car back on its tracks. Then he backed into the crowd modestly and pulled out a silk handkerchief to brush the dust off his pink hands.

Then and there opportunity knocked, and yours truly, Ham-and-Eggs Brown, jumped to answer. I sprang for the articles that spilled out of this guy's handkerchief pocket. My chance to get next to him. Something told me there was money in them biceps.

"Your notebook and money,



The man from the future hit the punch-meter and it exploded violently

mister—" I drew up out of the shuffle of feet to hand the fellow the silver coin and the little gray memo book—

But he was gone—practically. I saw him, half a head above the crowd, making for the sidewalk. I darted after him. The congestion caught me. I charged around two fat men and took a shortcut under a news-camera. By that time the fellow was out of sight.

I looked at the stuff in my hands. The coin went to my pocket automatically. The notebook hung disturbingly in my fingers.

I drifted into the first restaurant, turned the pages of the notebook over



a plate of spaghetti. The notes were shorthand of some sort. Might as well try to read my spaghetti.

But here was a patch of neat long-hand.

Must brush up on archaic writing.

The final entry was in the same legible hand:

Underwent the test. No ill effects. The time-transfer was instantaneous. Arrived at the ancient year of 1950—a 9000 year jump. Fine sunny day, but noise and smoke are terrible. Otherwise, so far so good. Must get busy at once.

I pushed my spaghetti aside, gulped my ice-water, mopped my brow. The date of that entry was May 10, 10,950!

Reaching into my pocket for aspirins I found the coin. It was screwy too. Dated 10,945. And worn. The letters said, *Twenty-five Cents. America.*

Not U. S. A. Just America. I looked around to see if some gagster was watching over my shoulder. Hell, if this thing was on the level the guy that heaved that street-car was no mere Hercules, he was a gold mine! He needed a promoter. Ham-and-Eggs Brown to the rescue! Bundle this fellow off to Hollywood—

But where would I find him? A chill hit me. Darned if I hadn't let him slide right through my lunch-hooks and lose himself among four million—

A shadow crossed my unfinished spaghetti and I looked up to see the well filled gray topcoat and hat crossing in front of me. I almost leaped.

"Steady, Ham!" I said to myself. "He might be delicate. Don't scare him off. Don't—ah!"

The fellow had forgotten his check. I picked it up, started after him, at the same time glancing in his notebook for his name.

"Mr. Destinoval."

The fellow whirled and a passing

waiter jumped to avoid a spill.

"Your check, Mr. Destinoval." I gave him my suavest smile. "Also the things you spilled by the street-car."

As his hand closed over the articles I got a good look at his face. Aside from being contorted with bewilderment it was a good face, one to compare with your favorite movie hero. A trifle less heavy on the jaw, a bit bulgier on forehead. Something sensitive in his features like a well-bred racehorse. At the sound of his name his ears pinkened, his crisp eyelashes flickered.

Then he managed a smile and uttered some words too fast for me to understand, which I took to mean thank you.

"My name is Ham Brown, Mr. Destinoval—"

The introduction was lost. He was off. He strode past the cashier, never stopping to pay.

The cashier shouted and a little dried apple of a manager and two husky waiters caught their cue and bounded outdoors after him. I slapped my money down and gave chase, overtaking them approximately two pie-throws down the street.

The argument was painfully one-sided. The little dried apple waved his fists and cursed the air blue. Destinoval looked scared to death—obviously up to his ears in trouble. So I plunged.

"I'll pay it."

The glares turned on me. But as quick as J. D. Destinoval saw he was supposed to fork over his check, I put some cash with it and the matter was settled. Dried apple and bodyguard trooped off grumbling contentedly.

This time I grabbed my protege by the sleeve and hung on.

"Why'd you do it, pal? Don't you know no better?"

What he answered buzzed off his tongue fast enough to put a tobacco

auctioneer to shame. I didn't get a word of it.

"Come again," I said, "or ain't you hep to English?"

He gave me the same scared eye he'd wasted on the restaurant manager and tried to pull away. I bulldogged his coatsleeve all the way to the stoplight. Then I let go. Two cops and a plain-clothes on the other side of the street were looking our way hungrily.

WE backed into a doorway and my protege talked on.

"Hold it!" I said. "Is that the way you talk where you come from?"

He nodded eagerly. He rattled on, pointing first to me and then to the gray memo book. His eyes brightened as we came to an understanding.

"Yes, I read a little of it," I admitted. "That's where I got your name. If you're on the level about coming back from 10,950—"

He almost hugged me, he was so excited. He shook both my hands at once. Out of the wild rattle of his words I caught exactly nothing. I broke in:

"Listen, partner, you need a friend and I'm it. I'm your general manager, see?" I flashed a card at him. "Promoter, that's my business. We'll draw up a contract. But first you've got to slow down that sixteen cylinder jabber—Quiet! We can't both talk at once. . . . What's that . . . Say it again. . . . Slow! . . . *Slower!*"

Gradually I throttled him down and his smooth rich voice made sense.

"I'm at sea, my dear atom-smasher." He was addressing me with a term of endearment, as I later learned. "Why can't we both talk at once?"

"It's bad manners."

"Why?"

"Because when one guy's talking the other oughta listen."

"That's absurd," he said. "Can't you talk and listen at the same time?"

"Maybe *you* can," I said skeptically.

"Of course. It's perfectly good etiquette as long as not more than six talk at once. It takes five or six to round out a conversation, in my times, and nobody misses a word."

"You're back in the twentieth century now, brother," I advised. "A word to the wise. And another thing—this business of walking out on your bills—"

Anxiety flickered through his face. This was a matter he'd tried to ask about, he said, but no one had understood him. I questioned him and saw there was a trouble cloud gathering.

You see, he carried a head full of dangerous notions. They might be good for 10,950 but they were screwball for 1950.

"I supposed food was free," he said. "Now in my times—"

"These ain't your times," I snapped. He squinted an eye at me.

"Do you pay to walk on the sidewalks? To sit in the parks?"

"Of course not. That's public. Everybody uses the streets and parks—"

"My point exactly," he said. "In my times everybody uses food and beds. The public pays the bill from our taxes. If a man needs a room at a hotel—"

"Great guns! Don't tell me you've walked out on a hotel bill!"

My answer came in action stronger than words. The cops and the plain-clothes man had crossed the street toward us. The plainclothes, who happened to be the house dick at the Ingerbond Hotel, thrust a thumb at my friend and muttered,

"That's him. Professional deadbeat, most likely."

"We'll let the judge look into it," said a cop.

As they led him to a wagon he looked

back with a hint of scare in his movie-star face and called,

"Don't forget, you're my manager."

I grabbed a car for the police station.

Then remembering I was short on ready cash I back-tracked, through a time-costly traffic jam, to the Daily Beacon. I brushed past the city editor and hove up at the desk labeled: VELMA MACK, SOCIETY.

"She's not in," growled Split-Infinite, the rewrite man.

"Give her my love," I said. "Tell her bluebirds are singing. She'll get that vacation to Atlantic City. I'm taking her myself."

Split looked me up and down.

"When'd your rich uncle die?"

"None of that. I've just made the discovery of the year—a man with uncanny talents—hell, he's colossal! I'm giving him six months on vaudeville—I've got an in, you know—then Hollywood."

Split lit a cigarette.

"What's his name?"

"J. D. Dest—" I considered. This man from the future needed a name that would look well in the headlines. Ah—"John Doe Destiny."

I sat down at Velma Mack's desk to write her a note. A cigar was burning in her ash tray and the aroma caught me.

"Beau Tassel's been here."

Split nodded.

"His Detroit fights were called off."

"I don't like the way he comes borrowing money from Velma."

"He didn't. Just came to say he'd take her on her Atlantic City vacation—"

"He'd take her!" I bounced up from the chair. "Hell, that won't do. Any way he can't swing it—"

"He was dressed up like a million."

I writhed. If Beau was sporting a

new outfit, he'd dipped into our prize money again—that three hundred dollar radio contest award that had brought him and Velma and me together in an off-the-record corporation.

"Beau claimed he'd sighted a bonanza." Split opened the noon edition to a picture of the derailed street-car. It showed the dozen men heaving and the center one was John Doe Destiny. The staff artist had drawn a question mark on Destiny's back. The story started off.

Who is he?

Who is the mysterious Hercules that swung the street-car back on its tracks and disappeared in the crowd before the reporters could....

The thing caught me in the ribs.

"Is that all Beau Tassel had to go on?"

"He said he'd round up this he-man and make a heavyweight champ out of him. If you ask me, Velma went along to throw a monkey-wrench."

"Went where? They'll never find him. I'm the only one who knows—"

"Don't kid yourself. One reporter over at the police station called in twenty minutes ago to say the guy they'd dumped in cell seventeen was—"

I leaped from the desk and caught up my hat on the run. Outside the door I hailed a taxi and was off.

THE cop dozing in the tilted chair inside the rear door of the station opened one eye at me. I flashed my card at him and he let the eye fall closed. I strode back to seventeen. John Doe Destiny was there. And no one else, thank goodness. I assumed that Velma and Beau hadn't come yet. I extended my friendliest hand through the bars.

"Ah my friend—"

The man from the future ignored the hand. He blew his nose into his

silk handerchief, rolled his watery eyes like a prize bull at a livestock show suffering with nostalgia. I threw in a load of good cheer.

"I'll have you out right away, old man. I've got big plans for you—no, don't thank me now. Wait till we've cleaned up—"

"I'm sick!" John Doe Destiny moaned. "I've been back in this bygone age only twenty-four hours and I've already contracted one of your deadly diseases."

I gulped.

"What the hell?

"I've got a cold."

"In twenty-four hours? Must have had it coming on when you left home."

"We don't have colds back home," he blubbered. "I think I'll go back."

"Oh, no. You couldn't. You just got here. I've got to make Atlantic—er—you've got a career to think of, my boy. Come, brace up!"

"I'll probably die. I've no resistance." He took time out for snifflies. He really had 'em.

"Take it easy. Anybody in the pink like you—" I paused and turned the subject. "What kind of athlete were you back home? How'd you come to be so strong?"

"I'm just average," he said; but after I prodded him a little he opened up on his past, nine thousand years in the future. Everybody was in fine health there, he said. You had to be, or pay a fine for your negligence. He believed that scientific diet and exercise must have improved the race considerably, judging from what he had seen of us poor denizens of 1950.

While he talked I jotted a contract on an envelope. I'd get an exclusive on this mint.

"You haven't told anyone about yourself but me, have you?" I asked.

"At first I tried to tell everyone,"

he said, "but nobody understood. I never knew I was talking too fast till you told me." *

"I'm your doctor, J. D. Put your trust in me. Your whirlwind talk and street-car lifting and ability to hear six conversations will make you a top-notch attraction. Six months of foot-lights, then klieg. Sign here, Desty, and we'll transpose it onto sheepskin later."

He reached through the bars but didn't take the pen. He patted me on the shoulder.

"Brown, you're a real atom-buster. Tonight when I flash back through time I'll remember you as my best friend from these ancient days."

I WAS touched. The fellow was both sick and homesick. The bitter truth was, he'd got his stomach full of twentieth century in twenty-four hours.

Besides his cold, he'd filled up on smoke and dust. He'd listened to more terrifying traffic noises, witnessed more near-accidents, seen more people that looked like escapees from madhouses, heard more stupid slow-motion conversation, seen more evidence of outlandish superstitions, than he had ever supposed a civilization could be guilty of possessing.

Beyond that, he'd crashed into some silly laws and got himself jailed. The humiliation of it! Before he'd had time to get his bearings.

"All because you didn't meet the

* It has actually been proven that it is possible to increase the speed of speech until it is almost impossible to follow the words. And yet, when it is recorded, and played back slowly, it does not reveal a slurring or omission of words. Some types of nervous disorders result in this quickening of the speech. The man from the future is probably taught from birth to speak with great rapidity, and thus, his hearing is also trained to distinguish between the syllables. But, if you have this ability today, it might be a good idea to go on the vaudeville stage!—Ed.

right people," I said. "I'll make your troubles melt like snowflakes."

"Snowflakes!" he groaned. "It's all a blinding blizzard. If I survive this cold there are a thousand other diseases. The sanitation's abominable!" He paced his cell, a shaken man. "Already I've been hounded by a mouse in this very room. And this morning in my hotel I was awakened to find a deadly little winged beast hovering over me, the kind I've read about in horror stories of the past—a housefly."

He closed his eyes at the hideous thought. I tried to comfort him but he was off on another depressing rhapsody.

"How can I endure all this money madness? It's money, money, every time I turn around."

I tackled him on that point. How could he expect to come back and share this century's blessings (he raised a dubious eyebrow at my term) unless he contributed something?

That nettled him. He had come with a purpose. He hinted at some far-flung research that I wouldn't understand.

"Perfectly clear," I said. "Sign here and I'll see that you earn all you need. You can even start an anti-mouse campaign—"

A voice back of me broke in.

"Don't sign anything, Buddy. I've got you all fixed up."

I turned to glare into the massaged face of Beau Tassel. He strode up in a sprucy blue suit and blue hat with a yellow feather, and tapped a new white cane against the bars.

"I've phoned some pals to get a fight booked. I'll have you out of that cold and in training togs before you know it, Buddy."

Back of Beau came the snappy heel-click of Velma Mack. Maybe it was the extra rouge on her pretty face but she looked a little mad. At Beau, I hoped.

"You can't do it, Beau! He's too refined. He's a natural for culture lectures to high society. And for heaven's sakes quit calling him Buddy. . . 'Lo, Ham.'" She added the greeting as if I were an inconsequential part of the scenery.

John Doe Destiny gave a nasal bark that should have settled the matter.

"I don't wish to fight, Mr. Tassel."

"There!" Velma gloated. "I'll take him in hand. I'll see that he meets the best people."

"What goes on?" I roared. "He's mine—my own John Doe Destiny—booked for vaudeville—then Hollywood—"

"Since when?" Beau demanded, suddenly noticing me.

"I'm his manager. I found him. I discovered he has talents—more of 'em than the law allows in a prizefighter."

THAT blew Beau's lid off. The three of us cut loose in a three-way verbal fight. John Doe Destiny perked up. All of us talking at top speed made him feel more at home. He didn't miss a word. Me, all I got was that Beau and Velma had been here ahead of me and had learned he'd come back from the future and had tried to contaminate his ambitions. I shouted for my rights.

"I was first, wasn't I, John Doe? Didn't I show you my card?"

The hog-calling effects of our argument carried down the corridor. The cop jogged to his feet and stomped toward us. I lowered my voice.

"I agreed to be your manager—"

"But your card," John Doe Destiny cut in with a broad smile, "was an awful fake, my dear atom-buster."

This jolted me. I remembered having flashed the card under his eyes an instant so that he'd see nothing but a blur. The old Ham Brown technique.

"To be precise, Brown," John Doe followed through, "your card read, 'Social Security Act, account number 323-16-4475, Hamilton J. Brown, unemployed.' Your sleight-of-hand may do for this century, but nine thousand years of fast-moving civilization have quickened my eyesight."

You should have heard the silence. Of all the uncanny wallops this man packed, this was the startlingest. The three of us gaped, Velma and Beau being familiar with the nature of Ham Brown card flashes.

The cop broke the silence with the noise of scratching his head in an inspired manner. He opened his billfold and gave John Doe Destiny an eye-wink's look. Then,

"What'd you see?"

John Doe raised his brows, lowered his lids, and recited:

"Driver's License. Name of Operator, Jason McCudahey. Number 29792633. Street address. . ."

He read back every word of it. Right out of his mind. Darned if he hadn't photographed the thing with his eyes!

A strange light came into the cop's face. He started off, then came back and shook a finger at Destiny.

"Stay where you are, young fellow, till I see the chief. I figure the force can use you."

"I'm going back home," Destiny called after him, but the cop pounded away.

Velma, Beau, and I exchanged glances and came to our senses. No more argument. High time to settle on one plan before this bird flew out of our hands. We took ourselves back into a huddle.

"Co-operation's the word," I said. "Which'll it be—vaudeville star, socialite, or pugilist?"

"Grab for it," said Velma, taking Beau's cane and holding it up. We

grabbed, hand over hand. Beau's hand topped us.

"He's a prizefighter," said Beau.

WE TALKED our protege past the judge before the police chief came around with any tempting offers, so John Doe Destiny was all ours. Our pooled cash took care of all claims. We marched down the steps, arms linked through Destiny's, in the spirit of treasure hunters lugging a chest of uncounted gold.

We piled into the car Beau Tassel had rented, hesitated just long enough to toss the reporters a few salty statistics to make the public mouth water, and shoved off. Destiny heaved a big sigh.

"No workouts before tomorrow," said Beau. "A fresh-air ride's the thing for that cold."

"Anything to keep him entertained," Velma whispered to me.

I patted her hand. I knew her heart was set on that Atlantic City vacation. Well, we weren't going to let this golden bird fly back home nine thousand years out of reach. Fact was, we were becoming attached to the fellow.

"You'll like our little city," said Beau in the charming voice he'd practiced on Velma the last few weeks. "Nice little city."

Definitely the wrong tack. I tried to give Beau the high sign but he was too busy running stoplights. The stubborn multhead, he drove through all the newspaper-strewn parks, skyscraper canyons, and smoky railroad yards—a chamber of horrors to John Doe Destiny. To make it worse, Beau threw in a lecture. On that corner six gangsters were shot. In this block a tenement house burned to the ground one night and legend has it that some of the sleepers never woke up.

"Beau, for heaven's sakes, it's get-

ting late," Velma would wail from the back seat.

"It's never late when we've got a guest like Mr. Buddy Destiny," Beau would retort with a big-hearted laugh.

John Doe Destiny became nauseated. Frequently we passed blocks of slums. Our protests bounced off Beau like punches off a champion. To cap the climax he wound up with a tour around the stockyards.

We put Destiny to be a shattered man.

I sat up all night to be sure he didn't fly off to his own century—though I couldn't have blamed him much.

BY THE end of the week John Doe Destiny was fairly well under control. A whopping fight was billed for a Friday only two weeks away. This Killer Metheny was a big name and would draw a fat gate.

And maybe you think the newspapers and radio commentators didn't do right by our Buddy Destiny! Sports writers took this future business for an A-1 publicity gag; the public took it for a hoax. But nobody cared to stick his neck out. The evidence was too solid that John Doe was straight goods.

The newspapers headlined him as Buddy Destiny, the two-fisted forebodie of the year ten-thousand, the man with the watermelon biceps, the handsomest guy that would ever leap into a ring. (He'd never been in one before!)

Dopesters gave Killer the edge because they'd seen him fight. They said experience would tell.

We were sure of Buddy on the same grounds. Nine thousand years of experience weren't to be sneezed at.

Yep, Buddy Destiny had an advantage that the Killer camp completely ignored: ninety centuries of upbuilding of the human race into something sturdier, quicker, more sensitive—

There was the loophole!

John Doe Destiny didn't want to fight. He abhorred it. He'd never seen a prizefight and he hoped to keep that record clean. Where he came from people were genteel and delicate.

He took to roadwork and punching-bags like a veteran. He outclassed Beau in rope-skipping after the first hour. It was marvelous the way his habits clicked into place, once he was shown. The same as he'd learned to slow down his speech.

But could you get that guy into a ring with a sparring partner? No.

"I wouldn't care to hit any man," he would say. "Even if I were angry, I'd settle it some other way."

Every night after we got the fellow to sleep, Beau and I would have coffee with Velma and try to figure the thing out.

"The winner'll make off with seventy percent," Beau moaned.

"If we lose, Atlantic City is off my calendar, that's all," said Velma resignedly, looking at us like a beautiful lady on a poster appealing for funds. "Your fair-haired boy knows how to count money. He's made out a budget. Out of thirty percent we'll get expenses only—if he fights."

"But if he wins, Velma," I said, "I'm taking you to Atlantic City."

"I'm ahead of you, son," said Beau suavely.

"If he wins, you'll both take me." Velma divided a peach marmalade smile between us. But Beau pulled the gloom cloud over us again.

"How'll we ever get him to fight? Every time I argue the matter he threatens me. Says he'll hop for home."

Velma lowered her eyelids as if maybe she had a glimmer.

"If he's never swung at a partner," I suggested, "how do you know he packs a wallop?"

"We'll know tomorrow," said Beau. "The Detroit A. A. is bringing over their famous striking meter. If he can hit a ten he can deliver a knockout."

Beau was being optimistic. Killer Metheny had struck a thirty-two.

THE next day the truck unloaded the meter at our back door and a circle of reporters helped roll it to the center of the gym floor. I looked around for John Doe Destiny.

He was standing by the window in trunks and gloves, a sunshiny mountain of handsome muscles, having a chat with Velma. I sauntered over.

"What do you remember most from that car ride?" Velma was asking him. A look of pain shot through his face.

"I remember everything," he said. "But the most heartrending sight was that three story firetrap at 7892½ Manodene Street, with fourteen ragged children playing on the walk in front of it, and six broken windows patched with newspapers and rags—"

"Would you like those children to have a better home?"

A quick light came into Destiny's eyes.

"Do I have anything to say about that?"

"You could offer to build them a decent house if you had the money."

Beau Tassel interrupted, calling Destiny over to the striking meter. We all crowded around.

"Don't be afraid of hitting too hard," said Beau. "The world's champ did forty-eight. That still leaves half the dial. Go ahead, Buddy."

Destiny gave the thing a wallop. The dial jumped to three. The sports writers groaned and I, for one, felt an awful emptiness in the stomach.

Tassel snapped the dial down and tried to quiet the uproar among the onlookers. Their harsh talk cut John

Doe to the quick. An assistant trainer's muttered oath acted on him like a foul blow. Velma pushed into the circle and made the assistant apologize and after a few minutes we persuaded Destiny to try again.

"Hit it as hard as you can," Velma said.

Destiny lashed out. There was an awful clang and the meter crumpled back and splashed metal parts all over the floor. Nothing was left of the dial. John Doe Destiny blushed and backed away, saying that if they didn't mind he'd like to be excused to continue a conversation with Velma about a house.

WELL, this was the big night. We kept our dressing room door closed to the last minute. The uproar was terribly jarring to Destiny's delicate nerves. He shuddered and paced the floor all through the preliminaries.

"They're hitting each other," he would chant with his eyes closed. "They're mauling each other with their fists." Then he would turn to Beau and me and plead, "Do I actually have to strike my opponent to win this fight?"

"Just once," Beau would answer.

Our call came. We jammed plugs in Destiny's ears and hoped the shouting wouldn't terrify him too much. We ushered him through the jampacked aisle to his corner.

The announcer introduced Killer Metheny in glowing terms. Then he led John Doe Destiny to the center of the ring and sang out:

"They say he comes back from ten-nine-fifty, and what a nifty! His punch is a sensation to jolt you future generations! Ho-de-ho-de, the two-fisted foreboodie, Buddy Destiny!"

Tumultuous applause and shouting. Velma Mack at my elbow chewed gum and pounded her hands like mad.

The fight was on. The gong brought Killer Metheny prancing out of his corner like a champ. He crouched, sprang, threw a volley of punches at the air. But he didn't hit anything.

Buddy Destiny eluded him, sneaking out of reach with clever footwork that had the crowd gasping. Killer couldn't close the gap. Round one ended without a blow landed.

Destiny skipped back to his corner but he didn't sit. For some strange reason he just stood there surveying the crowd. Then he bent down to Beau Tassel.

"What are the gate receipts?"

Beau said he didn't know.

"Find out," said Destiny. "I don't want to fight unless I can make all I need to build a house."

He went back into Round two, and Beau turned to Velma and me with a gray face.

"The guy's out of his head."

"Don't you believe it," said Velma. "Go find out about that gate, and hurry."

Round two was like Round one, but fast. It ended with Killer madder than a bull because he hadn't been able to connect. The crowd was hooting.

Round three was a footrace spiced with the most amazing demonstration of ducking and dodging you ever saw. Buddy Destiny came back to his corner without being touched. But he looked sick. The boos were cutting him down. The crowd was all for Killer now. They wanted to see a fight.

Just before Round four Beau returned looking pale and scared. "Destiny, you've got to knock him out by the fifth. I can't tell you why but you've got to. This time get in there and—"

Velma gave Beau a restraining pinch on the arm. Destiny only said, "How much was the gate?"

Beau gave him the figure.

"It's not enough," said Destiny. "I counted the crowd at the end of Round one and checked my figures during Rounds two and three."

"A knockout by Round five!" Beau wailed.

"Go back and make them straighten up those accounts," said Destiny. "I won't strike a blow till you do."

ROUND four looked bad. Yes, there were limits to tricky footwork and dodging, not to mention hurdling, even for the versatile Destiny. He slowed down a little, used his guard more, took a glancing blow here and there. Killer was getting onto him at last, and did the crowd love it!

Still John Doe Destiny refused to strike a blow. His own camp groaned. Velma yelled at him wildly. The gong at the end of Round four was welcome music.

And the return of Beau Tassel, looking as eager as dynamite, was a welcome sight.

"You were right, Buddy. Someone tried to hold back part of the gate. The quick check-up caught him. Now, Buddy-boy, how about it?"

"Remember those poor little kids!" Velma cried into Destiny's plugged ears. "Think of that new home, all the good you can do with that extra dough—"

She was still shouting as Destiny went into Round five. She shouted for undernourished kids, for orphans, for widows, for homeless cats—

All at once you could see the imagination working in Destiny's face. His memory of the house with the patched windows set him off like a trigger. He walked into Killer Metheny.

The surprise action took the crowd for a hush.

Then—*spat*.

Killer Metheny bounced into the

ropes and hung there with the most completely cockeyed expression I ever saw. Probably an alltime high in cock-eyed expressions, judging by the way the crowd hit the ceiling. Technically, Killer wasn't down. That is, the ropes wouldn't let him down. But he was completely out.

Under the deafening roar the baffled referee took the situation in. What a picture! Destiny's photographic memory would preserve this one for a chuckle of pride nine thousand years hence—

But I was wrong. What John Doe Destiny saw was the stream of blood that oozed harmlessly from the nose of the veteran pugilist.

"I did it!" Destiny gasped. He fainted dead away and fell on his back in the center of the ring. The referee bent over him and counted him out.

IT WAS noon the next day when a loud knocking awakened me. I roused up and let Beau Tassel in. He looked like something wild and hunted.

"Have you seen Buddy Destiny?"

"No," I said. "What about him?"

"Gone."

"Gone where?"

I wished I hadn't asked the question, it brought such a whipped look to Beau's face. He turned away and jammed his cigar in an ash-tray. I tried to smooth things over.

"Too bad. He was a good guy."

"Yeah . . . No fighter, though."

"No, no fighter . . . Didn't he even leave a note?"

"He left nothing," said Beau, "except a check to cover training expenses.

That and a fund for a new house for some slum kids. That rounded out his thirty percent."

"Have you told Velma?"

Beau shook his head. I sensed that he was holding back something. I quizzed him and he admitted it. The plunger, he'd bet the last of our radio prize money that Destiny would win by the fifth. No wonder he didn't want to face Velma.

"We'd better tell her, the sooner the better," I said, so we made tracks for the Daily Beacon.

"Is she in?" Beau asked.

"Does her desk look it?" retorted Split-Infinitive. It didn't. It was heaped high with mail. "Fan letters," said Split, "on that special society broadcast she put over with your John Doe Destiny night before last."

Broadcast? We hadn't heard of any broadcast. Beau turned a little purple.

"She said Destiny needed some intellectual diversion or he'd go back home," said Split. "She had him do a lecture on the future of culture and refinement."

I fought for a deep breath.

"Do they get paid for that stuff?"

Split smiled.

"And how. Velma's got an advance for a whole series. You men should listen in. There'll be talks on the decay of vaudeville and the death of pugilism—"

Beau gave a deep growl.

"Tell me, how can he give any more lectures? He's gone."

"He'll be back from Atlantic City in a couple weeks," said Split. "He told me to tell you."

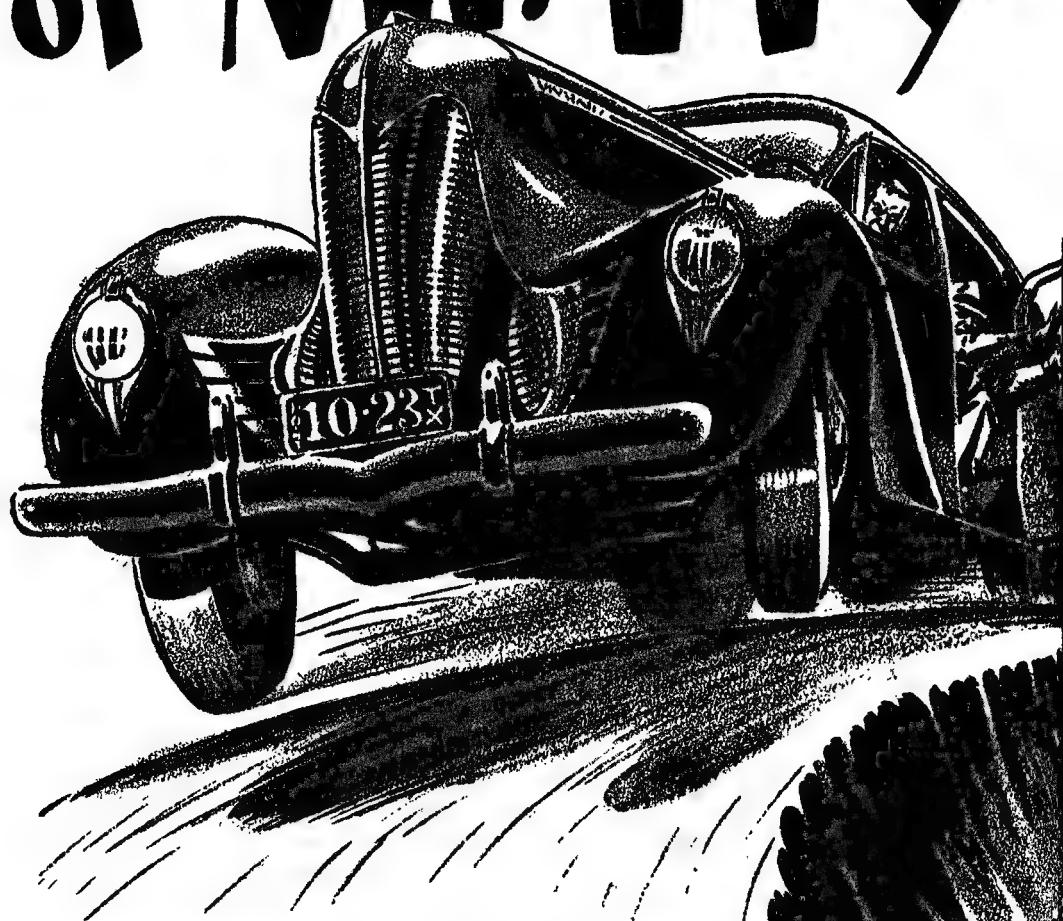
THE REFORMATION OF JOSEPH REED

By Robert Moore Williams

Ever since Williams thrilled you with his humor in "Mr. Murchison's Ghost" you have been clamoring for more of this type of story from him. Here's one at last that will have you rolling on your ear! And a fine fantasy too!

COMING NEXT MONTH!

the Genius of Mr. Pry



by Duncan Farnsworth

**Mr. Pry's job was giving information, but
he wasn't supposed to know everything.
And least of all, to know the future!**

PARKINGTON PRY was cursed by two things, the first of which was his name—a definite handicap to anyone trying to live in harmony with his neighbors—and the second of which was his overpowering curiosity.

Now curiosity is a good thing to a certain extent, and cleverly adhered to might even be an asset. But Parkington Pry was the sort of fellow to carry things too far. He let his curiosity run away with him. Especially where his job was concerned.

For Parkington Pry was the information clerk in the municipal museum, in

The door flew open, and Parkington Pry felt himself hurled out



which capacity Mr. Pry felt that it was his duty to know things.

Consequently, in keeping with his sense of duty, he invariably used Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings to sit in the local library and brush up on the sundry information he felt he might be asked to know.

This particular morning was Friday.

"I am getting sick and tired of having you spend every night of the week in that horrible library," Mrs. Pry told him as he left for the museum. "Tonight I want you home on time for dinner, and prepared to play some Chinese checkers!" His wife liked Chinese checkers.

Mr. Pry protested.

"But Glenda," he declaimed, "surely you understand that it is nothing more than duty that takes me to the public library every evening. As an information clerk, I must be informed. I must know things. If I am ever to get a promotion, I'll have to know all sorts of things."

"Such as what?" Glenda Pry answered with venom in her tone.

"Such as about douffle birds," Mr. Pry responded proudly. "Do you know the origin of the douffle bird?"

"I only know," Glenda his spouse replied acidly, "the origin of the early bird. And you are going to be just that tonight—or else!"

"But Glenda," Mr. Pry began again.

"You heard me," his wife said firmly.

ON his way down to work, Mr. Pry even considered going home for a change. But as the day wore on, and he grew more and more steeped in the exciting requirements of his job, Mr. Pry's sense of duty began to be overpowering. The lure of the library became too great. So, as he sat behind his counter, precisely one half hour be-

fore closing time, Mr. Pry was feeling qualms about the telephone conversation he would have to endure with his wife. He'd have to tell her he wasn't coming home—

"Shay—hic—where doesh a guy go to have himshelf stuffed?"

The voice, breaking in so abruptly on Parkington Pry's meditations, startled him somewhat.

"Three doors down to the left," Mr. Pry replied unconsciously, before he looked up into the face of the person sagging limply against his counter for support.

And then Mr. Pry's small, round, red face went ashen with shock—for he recognized the sagging person leaning against his counter. And recognized him as a peasant might recognize a king.

"Jay Worthington Throp!" The name escaped Mr. Pry's startled lips before he could stop it. Suddenly, Mr. Pry's hands were moist and his knees were knocking.

For Jay Worthington Throp was Mr. Pry's Diety, his Hero. Jay Worthington Throp was the master of ceremonies on that greatest of all radio shows, *Give Me The Answer!*

But just at the moment, Jay Worthington Throp, with his pearl gray gloves, pearl gray homburg, and pearl gray moustache, was stinking drunk. Mr. Pry perceived this fact an instant later, and then forgave it, for Jay Worthington made a thousand a week and was entitled to a little relaxation.

"You don't know me, Sir," Mr. Pry began humbly. "But—"

But if Mr. Pry had intended disregarding the feet of clay in his Idol, he was immediately disappointed, for Jay Worthington Throp suddenly let go of the edges of the counter and pitched happily forward on his gray moustache.

With a sharp cry of horror, Mr. Pry was around the counter and bending

over to give assistance to his Hero.

"Oh Mr. Throp," Mr. Pry muttered unhappily. "Oh Mr. Throp!"

Straightening with great effort, Mr. Pry managed to pull Jay Worthington Throp halfway to his feet. But Mr. Throp was heavier than his girdle let anyone perceive, and in addition to this, the floor of the museum was marble.

Marble can be very untrustworthy where footing is concerned, and Mr. Pry found this out in a horrible second later. His feet shot out from under him, and with Jay Worthington Throp on top of him, Mr. Pry did a neat back-flip, landing on the marble floor head-first!

A myriad of stars spilled gorgeously from a pitch black sky as Mr. Pry slipped into unconsciousness. And happily stretched over his thin, small body was the now slumbering form of Jay Worthington Throp.

UNFORTUNATELY for Mr. Pry, there had been no one in the museum to witness this accident. And fortunately for Mr. Throp, a taxi driver came hurrying into the museum lobby an instant after the accident occurred. The taxi driver looked at Mr. Throp, shaking his head sadly.

"I knew I shouldda kept my eye on him," he muttered sadly. Then, pulling Jay Worthington Throp off Mr. Pry, the taxi driver said: "This must be the friend he said he was gonna meet. Wouldn'cha know his pal would be plastered too?"

Sighing despairingly, the taxi driver—a very large hulking fellow—bent over and lifted the two unconscious forms under his great arms. "Might as well pile 'em back in the cab," he muttered.

No one paid particular attention to the taxi driver as he dragged his burdens limply from the museum and piled

them into the back seat of his cab.

And no one heard him mutter,

"Might as well drive around annudder three hours. Then I kin take Throp to his radio station in time fer his program, like he told me to."

The cabbie threw his hack into gear and drove on.

CHAPTER II

Pry Goes Network

EXCITED RED FACED MEN in expensively cut suits, dashed in and out of an ornate suite of rooms belonging to the American Broadcasting Network, some three hours later. In one of the rooms a shower was spraying icy water down upon the head and shoulders of Jay Worthington Throp, while in another room, stretched out limply on a couch, was the small, thin form of Parkington Pry.

A radio producer, dashing out of the room in which the shower and Jay Worthington Throp were battling, said over his shoulder to an assistant.

"Get in there and push Throp around a little more. He's starting to come out of it. We go on the air with *Give Me The Answer* in less than thirty minutes!"

The assistant nodded.

"Boy, he was crocked when he came in here." Then, marveling, "That guy's a genius!"

Fifteen minutes later, freshly clothed, sober, and shivering, Jay Worthington Throp looked down on the supine slumber of Mr. Parkington Pry. Looked down and frowned.

"Who's this?" demanded Jay Worthington Throp.

The radio producer who stood beside him looked astonished.

"What d'ya mean, who's this? Why, this little guy was with you. The cab

driver brought you both in together."

Jay Worthington Throp shook his head distastefully.

"Never saw him before in my life. Throw him out!"

"Why, we thought he was the guest you were hunting up for *Give Me The Answer* tonight. Where in the blazes is the fellow you were going to bring here?" demanded the producer.

Jay Worthington Throp's features turned the color of his gray moustache.

"Isn't there somebody here?"

The producer looked grim.

"Not a soul."

Throp bent over Mr. Pry and slipped his hand into Parkington's inner pocket. He brought forth a wallet and some cards. Looking through the cards, Throp stopped.

"Can't you stand a little kidding," he asked, his face flooding red once more in the vast relief he felt. "This is our guest, Ha, ha, ha. Just thought I'd throw a little scare into you. Yes sir, *Give Me The Answer* has a very special guest tonight—Mr. Parkington Pry, an honest to goodness information clerk!"

An assistant producer, hurrying by, overheard this.

"Boy," he muttered, looking enviously at Throp, "that guy's a genius!"

Mr. Jay Worthington Throp, overhearing the remark, nodded smugly. The radio producer just sighed.

BEFORE the microphone in the air theater of the American Broadcasting Studios, twenty minutes later, a frightened and bewildered Parkington Pry faced the smiling gray moustache of his Hero, Jay Worthington Throp.

"That," said the grinning Mr. Throp, "was a perfect answer. Really now, Mr. Pry, you're letting our experts look pretty silly aren't you?"

Mr. Pry turned slightly away from the mike to look frightenedly at the unsmiling group of four "experts" who were a weekly feature of the *Give Me The Answer* program. Unquestionably, ever since his introduction ten minutes ago, Mr. Pry had been making the "experts" look like dunces. And from the expressions on their faces, they hated P. Pry.

Mr. Pry gulped.

"Yes, sir," he replied. "Yes I am making them look like darned fools." And then, for the third time that evening, while the radio studio audience howled, Mr. Pry crimsoned. He hadn't meant to say that. He had meant to be tactful. But it was right. And every question he'd answered in the last ten minutes had been absolutely one-hundred percent correct.

Like the question about the name of the sixth cousin to Louis the Fourteenth who ate garlic and had but five teeth. Mr. Pry, on being asked who that person was, had given the name unhesitatingly, even though he was aware that he'd never known it before. The incident had frightened him at first, even in spite of the tremendous applause it drew from the studio audience. For Parkington Pry had felt as though another brain had seized control of his own vocal muscles and done the answering for him in his voice.

Jay Worthington Throp held up a hand to still the laughter of the audience. Then, smiling happily on Mr. Pry, as a schoolmarm might beam on a bright pupil, Throp asked:

"How many stitches did Betsy Ross put in the lower right hand corner of the first American flag she designed?"

And then it happened again. Unseen forces seemed to squeeze the words from Mr. Pry's tongue as he gave the answer. He couldn't recall ever having looked it up in the library, but never-

theless, the words just popped out of him!

The studio audience was breathless, while a man on the radio stage looked it up in a huge volume. He signalled Jay Worthington Throp.

"Indubitably correct!" shouted Throp. "To the last stitch!"

The studio audience let forth a roar of admiration, and the very wave of voices seemed to rush up to Parkington Pry and wash against his trembling knees. Cold sweat broke out on his brow, and he looked pleadingly at Jay Worthington Throp. But that gentleman was beaming enthusiastically, and bowing low from the waist, as if to take up any extra applause that Mr. Pry didn't get time to acknowledge.

Mr. Pry was terrified, thoroughly so. At first it had merely been the thought of being on the air that had scared him so. But now it was worse. It was the feeling of invisible forces working on him, turning him into a mastermind, frightening him horribly and casting a sort of morbid pall over his very soul.

BEFORE Jay Worthington Throp brought forth the next question, Mr. Pry had time to remember how much he had always enjoyed listening to this same program, and of the envy he had always held for Throp's "Board of Experts". He remembered, too, how he used to allow himself wild dreams in which he would do just this—in front of everyone—and establish himself as a genius of fact second only to Jay Worthington Throp.

But now, with all this at his feet, and in spite of the fact that he had stolen the show from the great Throp himself, Mr. Parkington Pry felt miserably, acutely, unhappily, morbid.

"Perhaps," thought Parkington Pry desperately, "it is this screaming headache." For the lump on the back of

his head was still present to remind him uncomfortably of his accident that afternoon.

But whatever it was that held him in its weird grip, Mr. Pry was thoroughly aware of one thing. He wanted frantically to get away from where he was at the moment. And inconsequential though it usually was, Mr. Pry found himself worrying about Glenda and the fact that he hadn't even had time to call her to explain that he wouldn't be home.

He was certain that Glenda would no more approve of his being here on the *Give Me The Answer* program than she would of his being in the library. And he was also very certain that Glenda wasn't listening to this program—for she detested it as heartily as her spouse had approved it.

Jay Worthington Throp was speaking now.

"Our sponsors—The United Universal Especially Fine Encyclopedia Company—have here a question they've been saving for just such a guest as yourself, Mr. Pry. In order to prove to the listening audience that even those appearing on this program are human where knowledge is concerned, our sponsors have always kept a particularly difficult question in reserve to trick their guest performers. Frankly, Mr. Pry, until you came along, we never had to use this question. But I'm sure you will share the thrill of the radio audience in realizing that this is the first time our Super Colossal Question has had to be used!"

There was a short hysterical burst of applause from the studio audience. Mr. Pry looked around and saw the "experts" glaring triumphantly at him. He realized that this was to be his Waterloo, and felt suddenly relieved. Missing this was going to be a pleasure. Then he could get out and go home to Glenda.

Jay Worthington Throp had stilled the audience by now. The entire studio was breathlessly expectant. Mr. Pry gulped. Throp spoke.

"Have you ever heard of the Einstein theory, Mr. Pry?"

Parkington Pry nodded.

"Yes, but I've never studied it."

There was a disappointed murmur from the audience.

"Then this question will be impossible for you, I'm afraid," Throp said cheerfully. "But, since we must stump you before you leave us, here goes." He took a long breath. "There is a gentleman in our audience, Doctor Calktrig, who happens to be one of the five men in the world who are competent to judge your answer. When you have finished, we will ask the good Doctor to stand up and tell us all if you were right or wrong." Another long breath. "Now, then, Mr. Pry, what is the basic premise of the fifteenth equation in the Einstein Theory?"

PARKINGTON PRY felt a wild surge of elation. Here was something he would be utterly incapable of answering. Here was a question which—

But a voice had already started talking, and with a sudden horrible trembling, Mr. Pry realized that it was his own voice!

"It's very simple," Mr. Pry heard his voice saying, "very very simple. You see it's like this—" And then, incapable of stopping himself, utterly out of control of his vocal muscles, Mr. Pry stood there listening to himself ramble on with familiar ease about the Einstein Theory. For fully six minutes Mr. Pry rambled on, easily, fluently, casually, and—something inside told him—obviously correctly!

And when he had finished, the audience sat there in stunned silence, while

the white haired figure of Doctor Calktrig climbed dazedly to his feet, an awed, bewildered expression on his wrinkled face.

"This," he croaked out in the dead silence, "is the most incredible thing I have ever witnessed. Mr. Pry has revealed not only the correct answer, but additional suppositions about which I, Professor Einstein, and the three other most eminent scientists in the world are totally ignorant!" His old voice broke for a moment, then he went on. "I will say with unqualified candor, that Mr. Parkington Pry is the greatest genius of knowledge the world has ever seen!" And then, terribly shaken with emotion, Doctor Calktrig slumped into his seat.

An incredibly wild wave of thunderous applause broke forth, and the entire studio audience was on its feet, rushing, scrambling, clamoring toward the stage on which the bewildered Mr. Pry stood cowering behind the equally astonished Jay Worthington Throp.

"Come on!" Throp gasped. "This program will never finish. The place is in an uproar. You'll be mobbed. Let's get you out of here!" And with that, a cordon of studio ushers formed around Throp and Mr. Pry as they battled their way to an exit.

CHAPTER III

Cross-Questions

IT was four hours later, and Parkington Pry squirmed uncomfortably under the excited barrage of questions which had been pouring down on him from all sides for the last three hours.

He sat in the executive offices of the United Universal Especially Fine Encyclopedia Company — located on the top floor of the skyscraping Big city Building — while Jay Worthington Throp, Doctor Calktrig, and six or seven

bigwigs from the Encyclopedia Company paced excitedly up and down before him.

On getting him out of the radio station, Jay Worthington Throp had spirited Mr. Pry into a taxi cab, and thence to where he now found himself. Even though it was somewhat late at night, the executives of the Encyclopedia Company, and Doctor Calktrig, had been glad enough to hustle down to these offices for a special conference in which the main subject of discussion was to be a means of capitalizing on their newfound genius.

As for Mr. Pry's part in this conference, he had been merely a bewildered and frightened foil for it all. He now had only one desire, and that was to get home to his wife. But when he had tremulously suggested this to Throp and the others, his request had been greeted with polite disregard.

"This fellow is a sensation," Throp had thundered at the assembled executives of United Universal Especially Fine Encyclopedias, "and since he is our—really my—find, we should decide at once how we can utilize this terrific font of knowledge. We'll have to act fast, gentlemen, for by morning every newspaper in the country will be carrying a feature story around the remarkable mental prowess of this genius!"

Somehow, from the tone of voice used by Throp and the rest, Mr. Pry felt as if he were a strictly inanimate object, like a wastepaper basket, or a new kind of mouse trap.

White haired, wrinkled faced, old Doctor Calktrig had been more calm and logical during the preliminary discussion of Parkington Pry.

"This is indeed incredible, gentlemen. But we shouldn't be too hasty. Perhaps Mr. Pry is a flash in the pan. He claims to be unable to understand where

he gets his information from, even though he has admitted to a study of factual material for a number of years. However, through the use of an I.Q. test I have developed, we'll soon be able to learn just how much this man really knows."

Parkington Pry had taken the test, and had done his best to fail in it. But the results were beyond his control. Doctor Calktrig had summed it up.

"This man is no mere genius," he declared huskily after grading Mr. Pry's paper. "He is the genius of Genius's genius's!"

This involved bit of wordage had the effect of a thunderbolt on Jay Worthington Throp and the assembled executives. For the executives, it produced wild glitters of greed in seven pairs of eyes, and for Throp it produced an exultant bellow of personal triumph.

"You see," said the impressario of *Give Me The Answer*, "Throp has scored again!" He strutted in front of Mr. Pry, pointing to him as a guide might indicate an interesting scenic view. "I have uncovered the person the world has been waiting for—the man who has tapped the source of all knowledge. He's worth millions!"

MMR. PRY, head still aching, felt morbidly that he should be consulted on all this pretty soon. Throp was talking as if he owned him, and Mr. Pry couldn't remember having signed any papers to that effect. Besides, although he seemed to know everything they asked him, he wasn't at all conscious of having the source of all knowledge in the back of his aching head. He didn't even realize *what* he knew, until he was asked a particular question demanding a particular answer. It was then that that hidden something took control of him and he found himself giving the right answer.

In a momentary lull, Mr. Pry plucked Doctor Calktrig's sleeve and explained this phenomena to him. The others weren't noticing, and Mr. Pry could see Throp, with the executives backed into a corner, heatedly discussing financial contracts.

Doctor Calktrig looked perplexed.

"You mean you don't actually know something until you're asked a direct question concerning it?"

Mr. Pry nodded.

"That's right." He felt that somehow Calktrig understood, and would now let him go home to his wife.

"But you say that you've been spending hour upon hour, year in and year out, digging up factual data in libraries," old Calktrig protested.

Mr. Pry nodded.

"My entire life has been devoted to questions and answers."

Doctor Calktrig shook his head, perplexed.

"Look, when did you first notice yourself giving ground to a more intelligent self; the force, that is, which you claim answers questions for you?"

Mr. Pry frowned.

"Just tonight. On the program. I can't recall it ever happening to me before."

Doctor Calktrig shook his head again.

"What happened to you this afternoon, anything unusual?"

"I met Mr. Throp," Parkington Pry answered, "and I fell on my head."

Doctor Calktrig seemed impressed.

"In that order?" he asked.

Mr. Pry nodded.

"Precisely that order."

Doctor Calktrig put a hand over his eyes.

"I must reason this out," he murmured. Suddenly he looked up. "I have it!" His voice was vibrant with excitement. "The fall on your head

affected your mind. For years, by your own admission, you have been battling—so to speak—against the bulwarks of knowledge. The fall on your head must have so affected your mind that it somehow slipped through the bulwarks of knowledge into the limitless field of Absolute Information On Everything There Is!"

Mr. Pry blinked.

"Yes," he said vaguely. "You're probably right. But I don't like it. I want to go home. I wish I'd never seen a fact or an item of knowledge in my life!" His morbid state was added to now by ragged nerves. The strain was telling.

But Doctor Calktrig paid him scant attention.

"He is the door to infinite knowledge!" he was exulting. "Why, this man will open up the Unknown utterly to the world!"

Mr. Pry merely looked at him listlessly. The Doctor's words, somehow, seemed to add to his morbid state of mind.

JAY WORTHINGTON THROP and the seven executives had stopped their bickering and now came out of the corner of the room and over to Mr. Pry. Throp was holding a paper and pen in his hand.

"Here, Mr. Pry. Sign here. This paper'll give you the best manager in the world, me."

Mr. Pry looked dully up at Throp's gray moustache. He made no move to get the pen.

"Don't forget, Throp," said one of the executives. "He's to turn out a Pry Nonpeer Encyclopedia for us before he does another thing for any other contracts!"

Another executive piped up:

"And he's to be featured with you on the *Give Me The Answer* program!"

But it was Doctor Calktrig who raised his hand, and in a voice of which none of his listeners would have thought him capable, thundered indignantly,

"Stop, all of you!"

Everyone in the room looked in astonishment toward Doctor Calktrig; even Parkington Pry. The old man was standing in the center of the room, looking like a male version of the Statue of Liberty, his right hand held dramatically aloft. All he needed was a torch.

"Stop," he bellowed again, although this time unnecessarily. "I shall not stand by and watch you exploit this man! I won't let you get away with it!" His eyes were blazing, and even Jay Worthington Throp was impressed.

"This man, or I should say this unwitting genius, belongs exclusively to Science!" Calktrig thundered. "He is going to revolutionize the world, do you understand? He is not going to be treated like a freak!"

And with that, Doctor Calktrig grabbed Mr. Pry by the arm and pulled him up to his feet.

"Come, Mr. Pry, you are going to with me," he declared

Throp and the seven executives stood there looking amazed as Doctor Calktrig ushered his charge out the door. They were still rooted to the floor as they heard the elevator door clang behind the old man and Mr. Pry from the hallway.

It was Throp who dashed out into the hallway first.

"Good Lord," he shouted, "are we going to let that old fossil get away with a million bucks on the hoof?"

But as the executives milled uncertainly around Throp in the hallway, it looked as if Calktrig were going to get away with their fortune. For the elevator had already started downward, and since it was nighttime, there was only one operator on duty. Forty floors

was a long way to jump, if they intended to catch Parkington Pry and Doctor Calktrig. Simultaneously, they cursed—

CHAPTER IV

More Exploiters

IN THE taxicab he had hailed on leaving the Bigcity Building, Doctor Calktrig, still breathing fire, snorted.

"There, I guess we've shaken those rascals. The nerve of them, the utter colossal nerve!"

Mr. Parkington Pry, sitting meekly beside him, nodded listlessly. Doctor Calktrig looked at him sharply.

"What's ailing you? Don't you feel well?"

Mr. Pry thought about this. Then he shook his head.

"No," he decided. "I don't. I don't feel well at all. In fact I feel terrible. It's just as though a pall were hanging over me."

The old Doctor looked at him as though he were a scientific gadget that had just gone on the blink. He shook his white head.

"Strain is probably the cause. Just strain. You need sleep. Some peace and quiet. We'll have to put you where those sharpsters will never think of going to find you. Then, tomorrow or the next day, I can present you to the Institute of Science."

"I just want to go home," Parkington Pry muttered gloomily.

Doctor Calktrig snapped his fingers.

"An excellent suggestion. Just the place for you. Throp and his band of vultures will never think of looking for you in your home. They'll think I spirited you away some other place, won't they?"

"Yes," said Mr. Pry, horrified as his vocal muscles were out of his control

once more. "Yes, they'll think you took me somewhere else."

Doctor Calktrig blinked in surprise. He hadn't expected an answer to his rhetorical question. But suddenly he beamed.

"Did you answer my question automatically?" he asked.

Mr. Pry nodded dumbly.

"Then that's capital," Calktrig exulted. "Perfect. You told me what I needed to know. Throp will never look for you at your home!" He chortled happily. "That's where we'll go!"

Precisely fifteen minutes later, the taxicab lurched to a stop before the modest suburban dwelling of Parkington Pry. Doctor Calktrig got out of the cab with Mr. Pry, and for an instant it seemed to him as if the good Doctor were intent on sticking around him for good. But much to Mr. Pry's relief, Calktrig merely said cheerfully,

"Well, here you are. I'll watch you until you get into the house. Then I'll give you a ring the first thing in the morning, and be out to take you to the Institute by noon."

Mr. Pry shook himself out of his stupor of melancholy long enough to smile wanly.

"Thank you," he said, and then added, "good night."

Slowly, Mr. Pry ambled up the walk. At the door, he pulled forth his key and inserted it with a minimum of noise. He dreaded to think what Glenda would have to say to him when he walked in at this late hour.

As he closed the door behind him, Mr. Pry called:

"Glenda, oh Gleeeeeennnnda!"

There was no answer.

Mr. Pry tried again, as he walked across the darkened living room and groped toward a table lamp.

"Glennnnndaaaa!"

At that instant, Parkington Pry's fingers found the cord on the table lamp. The living room was suddenly flooded with light. But the first thing to catch Mr. Pry's eye was a white sheet of paper on the lamp table. It was a note. Bending over to read it caused Mr. Pry's head to ache even more.

"Parkington: I have had enough of your library haunting and fact ferreting. I can't stand it any longer. I'm leaving for good. Don't try to find me.

Glenda.

P. S. I left a fresh shirt for the morning on the dresser."

MR. PRY sat down suddenly on the chair beside the lamp table. He felt like a man who has been unexpectedly kicked in the stomach by an overly large mule. Glenda—gone!

It couldn't be. It just couldn't. But she was. And there was the note to prove it. If Mr. Pry had felt moody and disconsolate a few minutes before, he was now an A-1 candidate for a noose and cyanide. Under even the most pleasant of ordinary circumstances, Mr. Pry would not have been able to accept his wife's walk-out with any degree of joy. But now, as things stood, with the horribly morbid pall that hung over him, plus the distressing events of the evening, it was just about too much to stand.

If Mr. Pry had been sitting in an electric chair rather than a living room straight-back, he would have happily pulled the switch and then and there ended his troubles.

His fondest dream—that of being America's Ace Fact Ferret—had inexplicably turned to ashes in his mouth. And now, in addition to that, Mr. Pry was faced with the fact that his wife had left him, and for good.

He was beginning, too, to realize the delicate irony of his situation. Here he was, one man among billions, having access to all the knowledge in the world, and yet he hadn't the faintest inkling that this was going to happen to him. He hadn't known it because only a question such as, "is your wife going to leave you?" would have brought forth the necessary knowledge. His font of incredible information had proved quite valueless, unless someone popped a direct question to obtain the desired information.

Mr. Pry suddenly found that, in addition to his originally morbid state of mind, he now found himself hating himself with a wonderful thoroughness.

"Why," he moaned despairingly. "didn't some one ask me about this?"

And it was while Mr. Pry was trying to recall where he usually put the iodine bottle—with a view toward swallowing it—that there came a loud and insistent knock on his front door.

Mr. Pry blinked. Then he rose and stepped across the room. He had a wild minute of fast vanishing hope that this might be Glenda returned, but when he opened the door, his spirits dropped.

A stranger stood there.

"Your name Pry?" asked the stranger. He was a thin, dark fellow wearing a white hat and cream colored spats.

Mr. Pry nodded, and the stranger glanced down at a newspaper he held in his hand.

"Thought so," he observed. "Getcha' coat!"

It was instantly apparent even to Mr. Pry's dulled senses that the stranger was holding a revolver with his other hand.

But Mr. Pry didn't care. He didn't want to stay around this forbidding house any longer anyway. He got his coat.

CHAPTER V

Bettamillion Botts

IT WAS a long black limousine in which Mr. Pry found himself riding this time. And the man in the white fedora and cream colored spats was sitting next to him in the back seat. Two burly individuals, both wearing white hats similar to that of the man with the gun, sat in the front of the car.

For a moment, as he was being pushed into the car, Mr. Pry had hoped that his captor might have been a policeman, come to get him for someone's murder. He felt that bad. It would be fine to have Glenda think of his poor corpse lying in a prison graveyard. However, from the manner in which he was treated by the men in the limousine, it became instantly apparent that—except for the gun carried by the be-spatted chap next to him—their attitude was not at all unfriendly.

Mr. Pry felt and sensed this, rather than knew it. For the two burly thugs in the front and the little fellow who sat beside him with the gun, confined themselves strictly to silence.

After what seemed hours of driving through the blackened night, the car at last swerved up a gravel road in a section which Mr. Pry figured to be even farther out of town than his suburban residence.

When the car drew up to a stop in front of a darkened farmhouse, Mr. Pry was not particularly surprised. For that was the way it always was in the movies. And when the boarded door of the farmhouse opened to admit Pry and party into a cheerfully furnished large room, he was also complacent.

The room was well lighted, and a fat, cheerful looking chap sat snugly in a large leather armchair beside a

fireside. He wore a checkered suit, had a red face, and sported a diamond stickpin on his yellow cravat.

He rose to meet Mr. Pry.

"Well," he boomed, "I'm glad to see you didn't have no trouble, boys." Then to Parkington, "Glad to meetcha, Pry. You and me is gonna do some big things together. And there'll be plenty of kale in it for both of us."

Mr. Pry dully extended his hand.

"I don't believe I know you."

"My name is Botts, Bettamillion Botts. Y'mean you've never heard'a me?"

"No," said Mr. Pry truthfully, "I haven't."

"What do I do, boys?" Mr. Botts asked rhetorically. And in a sudden wave of the same old terror, Mr. Pry felt his jaws moving, and his voice speaking.

"You are a big shot gambler. You make your money from horses and lottery bets," Mr. Pry heard himself replying.

Bettamillion Botts threw back his fat red face and laughed.

"Just as I said, Pry. We can't miss—you know everything!"

Mr. Pry was about to reply that that was precisely what bothered him, but then he gave up the idea, realizing that Botts, like all the rest, could never understand what happened to him.

However, Botts seemed cordial enough, and Mr. Pry felt himself rather liking the blustering fellow. Botts was obviously like all the rest, in that he wanted to capitalize on Parkington Pry's astonishing talent. But, unlike the rest, Botts was the first to mention Mr. Pry's own share in the profits. This consideration, though negligible, made Mr. Pry feel warmly toward the checker-suited gambler. As warmly, at any rate, as the gloom that hung over him would permit.

"**L**OOK," Botts was saying, "I get to the point fast. You know what my racket is, and from hearing your broadcast tonight, I know that you're just about the sharpest mugg ever to hit this town. I been keeping my eye out for someone like you all my life. I always said that if I got someone with as much brains as I got luck, there wouldn't be anything in the world to stop me from minting a million a day. Now you come along—see? So I'm set. We're partners. Whadda you say?"

"Partners?" Mr. Pry was perplexed.

"Yeah," said Botts. "We split, see? Fifty-fifty."

"But what," stammered Parkington Pry, "would you want me to do? Do you want me to go on the air, or do you want me to write an encyclopedia, or do you just want to turn me over to science?"

Botts roared with laughter.

"That's ripe. Here's a guy who can dope out anything you ask him, and he's giving me that stuff about writing an encyclopediment. Ha, ha, that's rich!" He paused, slapping Mr. Pry heartily on the back. "Naw, we'll play the horses, pick the lotteries, bet the stock market. We'll make millions, y'unnerstand?"

"Millions," Mr. Pry reflected. "You're the first one who put it to me that way." He hesitated. His head was aching and he still felt horribly depressed. "Do you suppose millions will make me feel better?" he inquired timidly.

This time Botts thundered his laughter.

"Boy-oh-boy, I'll say you'll feel better. Just wait and see. Just wait and see!"

Mr. Pry nodded.

"All right, then. But what about Jay Worthington Throp and Doctor Calk-

trig and the encyclopedia people?"

"Don't worry about nothing, y'unnerstand? We'll keep them pests away. You'll stay here in secret until we make our cleaning," Botts replied.

MAKING a cleaning was almost as easy as Bettamillion Botts predicted it would be. For the following week, Mr. Pry remained a favored guest at the deserted farmhouse, and on the questions of Botts and his cohorts, selected innumerable "winners" in various phases of legal and illegal gambling.

It was all very new and quite a little bit perplexing to Mr. Pry. The money that they kept giving him as his share of the killings was also very new and perplexing. Mr. Pry had never seen so much money in all his life.

But most perplexing of all to Parkington Pry was the fact that he had not lost his pall of gloom. His morbid state of mind was growing worse instead of better. Part of it, he realized, was due to his wife. But the other part, for some mysterious reason, had something to do with his strange powers. He grew more and more listless, more and more indifferent with each increasing day.

Money rolled in, and Mr. Pry yawned and felt miserable looking at it. He didn't even go to the trouble to get someone to ask him where Glenda had gone and would she return to him, although he was aware that he could easily obtain this information merely by having Botts direct the question to him. Perhaps it was because he knew that he possessed that information and could get it when he wanted it. But at any rate, he sat there, day after day, yawning and moping and feeling morbid as Botts fired questions at him and handed him money.

Mr. Pry could not recall when he'd ever felt so blue.

"Whatsa matter?" Botts would ask him. "You look like you're dying from worms or sumpin."

"My head aches," Mr. Pry would explain. "And I feel dopey."

"Wait," Botts promised him. "Just wait a day more, and you'll feel plenty better. Tomorrow, with this cash we've piled up, we're gonna make a killing that'll put us on easy street for life."

But Mr. Pry only nodded indifferently.

On the following day, however, Botts was visibly excited as he faced Mr. Pry for the morning question bee.

"Look," said Botts. "This is the day—see? We're gonna stake everything on a certain race this afternoon. I gotta know who's gonna win it, like in them other races you doped for me before. But this time is gonna be the most important of all. We're riding every last cent we got on it. You wanna get in on the same basis with us?"

"How much money do I have now?" Mr. Pry asked merely to be courteous, rather than inquisitive.

"Fifty grand," Botts replied.

"In American money that would be—"

"Fifty thousand frogskins," Botts translated. "Whatta you say?"

"Very well," Mr. Pry replied, still trying to be polite.

"Itsa third race at Palm Pot Park," said Botts excitedly. "We got the dope that a hundred-to-one shot is set to go through. But we ain't been able to check it. The mule's name is Flybird. Is that right? Is Flybird gonna win really?"

Mr. Pry, who was thoroughly used to letting his voice speak for itself by now, heard himself reply:

"That is absolutely right. Flybird will win the race."

Botts was exultant.

"Wheeeeeeeeeeee!" he yelled. Then

he was gone. Watching the black limousine pull out down the gravel road, Mr. Pry was conscious that this day he felt worse than ever before.

WHEN Botts returned some three hours later, he had a handful of tickets which he handed to Mr. Pry.

"These is yours," he announced. "You hold 'em until the race is won. Then I'll cash 'em for you." He had taken his place in his favorite red leather armchair, and now he snapped on the radio. The two burly hoodlums had also gathered in the farmhouse living room, as well as the slight, dark, cream colored spats chap. Everyone—with the exception of Parkington Pry—was visibly excited.

"They're lining up for the start of the third race at Palm Pot Park," an announcer's voice suddenly crackled out from the loudspeaker. "This is the feature race of the day, for three year olds and up. There are seven horses in the field. And I'll name them in the order of their starting positions."

While Mr. Pry listened with a morbid sort of detachment, the announcer ran through six names.

"Then at number seven position, wide on the outside, we have Flybird, a hundred to one shot, the joke horse of the afternoon."

Botts looked sharply at Mr. Pry.

"You certain?" he asked. Mr. Pry nodded and yawned.

"We're playing him to win," Botts reminded him.

"He'll win," Mr. Pry said with gloomy certainty.

The announcer was babbling on, and then, suddenly:

"They're off and running! Houseafire is in the lead, taking the pole by three lengths as they round the turn . . . Come Quick is second by a length . . . My Chance is running third . . . Baby

Me is up close for fourth . . . Goody, and Aces Wild are neck and neck for fifth . . . Flybird is trailing."

"Come on, Flybird!" Botts bellowed.

"Now they're in the back stretch," the announcer was saying, "and they're just about the same, with the exception of Flybird, who's moved up to fourth position and coming along strong. Houseafire still leads the field by two lengths. Rounding the turn it's still Houseafire by a length. Flybird has moved up to third!"

"Come on, Flybird!" Botts entreated hoarsely.

"They're in the home stretch," the announcer babbled excitedly, "and it's still Houseafire, but only by a half length. Flybird has moved up fast into second position and is pressing Houseafire hard! Two hundred yards from the finish line it's still Houseafire by a quarter length. Flybird's jockey is giving the animal everything but a cannon! They're neck and neck, Houseafire and Flybird, thundering toward the tape. Flybird is ahead by a nose! They're even again. Now it's Houseafire by the damp of its nose. Aaaannnnnd itsss—Houseafire by a nose! Houseafire the winner, Flybird second!"

Parkington Pry sat bolt upright, stunned.

Botts snapped off the radio.

The silence was pregnant.

"So you were positive," said Botts.

From the tone of the gambler's voice, Mr. Pry realized for the first time how unfriendly that gentleman could be when he wanted to.

Mr. Pry didn't have time to realize he was suddenly no longer listless. He gulped, frantically. The two thugs had risen and were walking toward him. The dapper chap was tearing up a batch of red tickets that must have belonged to all of them.

"Flybird won the race," Mr. Pry

heard himself insisting, but his tone lacked conviction.

"Yeah," said Botts, "probably a moral victory. Get up!"

Shakily, Mr. Pry rose to his feet.

"Look," he gurgled.

"Say your prayers," Botts suggested.

Fifteen minutes ago, Mr. Pry would have greeted the suggestion that some one shoot him with a mixture of bland indifference and morbid delight. Now, suddenly, he wanted quite definitely to live.

"Get the car ready," Botts said to one of the thugs.

PARKINGTON PRY pulled himself out of a roadside ditch an hour later, dazedly wondering why Bettamillion Botts and his helpers hadn't finished the job and murdered him. His clothes were torn and muddy, and his face was nothing more than a bloody smear. But as he stepped groggily up onto the highway, Mr. Pry realized that his bones — though badly nicked up — weren't broken and he could still walk.

It was afternoon and the sun was shining, and Mr. Pry suddenly realized that his head didn't ache any more. This was strange, for he distinctly recalled having been dumped out of the speeding limousine directly on that part of his anatomy.

A car whizzed by, and Mr. Pry held up his thumb a second too late. Then another car approached. It stopped beside him. The driver leaned out.

"You know the way to Somerville?" the driver asked.

Mr. Pry frowned.

"Gee, you got me. I dunno," he said automatically.

The driver suddenly noticed Mr. Pry's appearance, and with a clash of gears, gave his car the gas and got out of there. But Mr. Pry, looking after him, was grinning like an idiot.

"I didn't know!" he told himself exultantly. "I didn't know!" His features wreathed in a bloody smile of sheer lunacy. The morbid cloak had dropped from his shoulders, and suddenly his heart was pounding in delightful excitement. The spell was gone. He was just like any other human being. He didn't have that horrible certainty of being able to know whatever he wanted. For the first time in hours, there was a zest in life!*

And suddenly Mr. Pry was tremendously happy that Doctor Calktrig would never be able to use him for science. Such a catastrophe would have meant a world surfeited with knowledge, a world sapped of suspense, a world from which every last thrill had been eliminated. Mr. Pry shuddered at the thought of a world like that.

A car screeched to a stop beside him. "Geeze," said the driver. "You're a mess, buddy. Climb in."

Mr. Pry climbed in. The car had a radio, and it was on. The car started up, Mr. Pry heard an announcer say;

*Here we have the explanation to Mr. Pry's morbid spell. It was because he'd been living in a world without suspense, a world lacking excitement in the unknown. No wonder he'd felt so morbid, so gloomy, so listless. The thrill had left everything completely. But now it was back. He was a normal human being again. Bloody and beaten—but normal!—Ed.

AL ADDIN AND THE INFRA-RED LAMP

(Concluded from page 99)

"Where's Major Mastiff?" Albert asked with some of his old caution.

"In bed," George answered. "He wuz tired."

Albert stretched out luxuriously.

"George," he said gratefully, "you saved my life. By getting rid of all that evidence you did me and Major Mastiff a real big favor. If there's anything I can do for you, just name it."

"How about a steady job?" George

Let me repeat that to all you horse fans. In the Third Race at Palm Park, Houseafire was disqualified, and Flybird was declared the winner!"

The driver looked at Mr. Pry's face, suddenly gone ashen.

"What's wrong, buddy?" he asked.

But a cold sweat was running down Parkington Pry's forehead. He gulped furiously.

"Ask me," he said hoarsely, "if my wife will ever return to me!"

The driver looked startled.

"Okay, will she?"

Time hung motionless for Mr. Pry. But nothing seized his voice. Then, deliberately, he said:

"I don't know, but I hope so." And quite suddenly he was laughing hysterically in relief, remembering the man who wanted the way to Sommerville a few minutes back. And then, too, he was thanking Bettamillion Botts for having dropped him out of the limousine on his head.

Then, unconsciously, he was digging a bunch of red betting markers from his ragged clothing. The driver looked at him and whistled.

"Are those good?" he gasped.

"I don't know," said Pry. "But I hope so." He chortled happily. "You dont know how much fun it's going to be, just waiting to see!"

asked breathlessly, "I yam handy in the house and I got good refrunces. How about keeping me on?"

Albert frowned.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, George," he said thoughtfully, "if you can fix up the little squabble Miss Margot Mastiff and I had some time ago, you're on. If she's here in my arms in fifteen minutes the job is yours."

"Okay, Boss," George said and lumbered out of the room.

P.S.—He got the job.

Henry Horn's Super-Solvent

by DWIGHT V. SWAIN

"**A**T IT again, Henry?"

Henry Horn squinted in annoyance over the top rim of his steel-framed glasses at his accoster, a tall man who stood frowning on the other side of the cluttered laboratory bench.

"'At it again'?", Henry mimicked, scraggly goatee wobbling. "Well, what if I am? You don't have to act like a big man in a white coat is coming after me with a butterfly net, do you? Other people have hobbies to help them relax. Why shouldn't I?" He picked up a florence flask and stared speculatively at its contents.

"No one said you shouldn't have hobbies, Henry," Professor Paulsen sighed wearily, "least of all me. I admit frankly that raising guinea pigs isn't the most exciting of occupations. I don't blame you for wanting an avocation. But why in heaven's name do you have to choose the things you do? Why can't you just buy a camera, or learn card tricks, or collect stamps?"

Henry poured a green liquid into a graduate, added a few drops of an oily substance. "My hobbies *may* be a little unusual," he admitted, "but they amuse me and they're harmless—"

"Harmless!" exploded the professor. "Do you call it harmless to blow half

There it was—accidental, but real; a solvent that dissolved everything. But unlike other acids, it was insatiable. . . !

the roof off the laboratory?"

"I didn't mean to blow the roof off. I was just trying to develop a new kind of detonating cap, and—"

"And that time you blighted every peony within 10 miles," Professor Paulsen went on relentlessly, leveling an accusing finger. "Don't forget that."

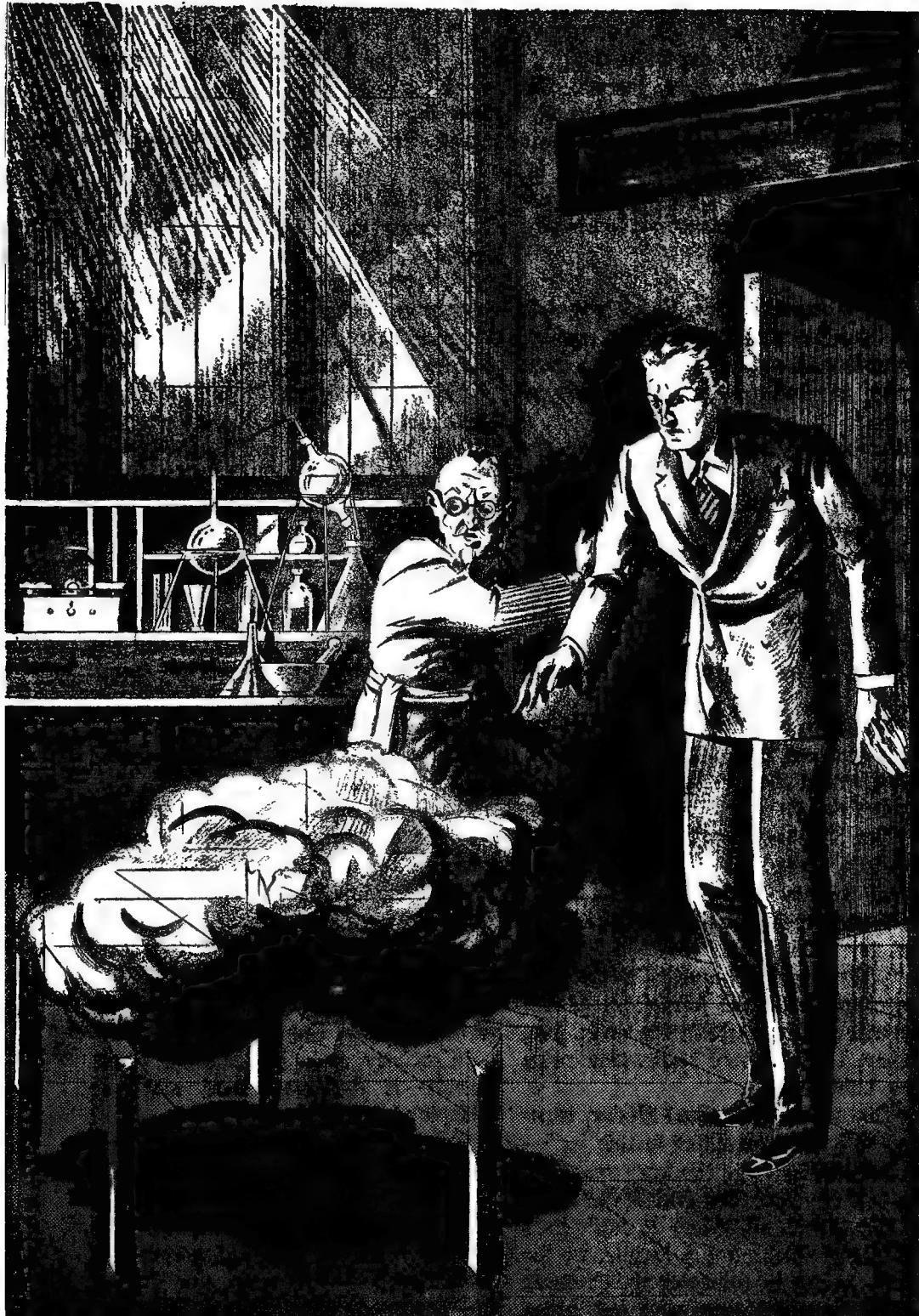
Henry gulped. His small body seemed to shrink into itself.

"You know that was a mistake, Joseph," he protested. "It was only supposed to affect ragweed."

Glaring, his friend and partner continued.

"Even that didn't teach you a lesson. You had to conjure up a death ray that wouldn't kill anything, but that would—and did—render every one of our guinea pigs sterile. And with us making our living raising guinea pigs for laboratories!"

Under lip quivering, goatee jerking



The caustic cloud had dissolved the table and everything on it!

in spasmodic unison with his Adam's apple, Henry raised the white flag.

"I guess you are right, Joseph. My hobbies haven't turned out very well." Then, a sudden gleam lighting his eyes: "But this one is different, really it is. It couldn't do any damage, and after all, a universal solvent *would* be awfully useful."

"A what?"

"A universal solvent. Something that will dissolve anything. I was reading about it in an old book. Men have been trying to find one for thousands of years."

Professor Paulsen came around the bench, put his arm around his little friend's shoulders.

"Henry," he said gently, "isn't there a slight problem you're overlooking?"

"What?"

"What are you going to keep this solution in?"

"Oh . . . well, I could develop something."

"Not if your solvent is truly universal," declared the professor firmly. "I think you'd better forget about the whole thing."

"But I've been working on it nearly a month, Joseph. I'm sure I've almost found the answer. I've studied corrosives and caustics and combined them, and developed new ones—"

"With the net result," interrupted the other, "that the laboratory probably will rot away within the week. No, Henry, I think you'd better pick out a new hobby."

"Oh, all right," sulked Henry, turning. "I'll put everything in this jar"—he indicated a large crockery vessel on the bench—"and then pour it out down at the gravel pit where it can't hurt anything." Suiting his actions to his words, he began emptying the contents of the various flagons and test tubes and beakers into the big container.

"Stop it!" bellowed Professor Paulsen, excitedly grabbing for the tail of his friend's lab coat. "You don't know how those are going to react to each other. You may blow the place up!"

HE was too late. From within the crock came a great hissing and frothing and spitting. Clouds of purplish vapor poured forth, to hang thickly over the bench. Hastily the professor dragged Henry to the other end of the narrow room and safety.

"Now you've done it," he fumed. "I'll have to start the blowers, and Lord only knows how long it will be before we can use this place again."

"Joseph!" croaked the other. "Look!" He pointed a quivering, scrawny forefinger at the bench. "Look!"

The professor turned. His jaw dropped. His eyes bugged. The lab bench was gone, jar apparatus and all! Or almost gone. The four heavy wooden legs' lower ends remained, still balanced and undisturbed. But about 18 inches from the floor they terminated in jagged peaks.

Then a stray eddy of air carried a tentacle of purple gas—the mass of which, still uniquely cohesive, continued to hang in a thick cloud slightly less than midway between floor and ceiling. As the vapor swirled again Professor Paulsen's scalp prickled sharply. The gaseous caress had disintegrated another six inches of the wood!

"Crockery, glass, iron, rubber, wood, marble—it dissolved them all!" he whispered hoarsely.

"There was a wax-covered lead tray, too," Henry added.

His partner glared at him.

"Well, for once you've done what you set out to do. If that isn't a universal solvent, it'll do until one comes along." He hesitated, then, half to himself: "What now? How the devil are we

going to get that alchemist's nightmare out of here?"

"Turn on the blower, just like you said" suggested Henry, brightly helpful.

Professor Paulsen nodded.

"That sounds logical," he agreed, "but somehow I'm suspicious of it. We'll try it, but get ready to run. I have an idea that gas isn't going to do anyone any good if it touches him." He stepped over to the switch-box in the corner and turned on the big fan which sucked noxious gases and bad smells from the laboratory. Tensely the pair watched the purple vapor begin to circulate upward and toward the gray blur that marked the spinning fan.

Then, as the dark mist touched the blades—silence! Noise of fan and motor were blacked out as if by magic. Daylight streamed through a huge, gaping hole in the siding.

"The fan!" whispered Henry shakily. "It's gone, Joseph! And the wall!"

"Don't worry about that, Henry," the professor thankfully wiped cold sweat from his forehead. "Just be grateful we got that devil's brew out of here without having it take an arm or leg or two of ours along for a souvenir!"

ED JARRETT, veteran Transamerica Airlines pilot, peered curiously out the window of the big Douglas DC-3 which at the moment was his responsibility.

"Hey, Tony," he grunted, "what in Sam Hill's that thing up ahead?"

"Huh?" said Tony Burroughs, copilot. "Why . . . why, I dunno. Looks sorta like a purple balloon from here."

Ed glanced at the instrument panel, brows puckered into a frown.

"Well, I don't like the darned thing. The way the wind's bearing, if it's free it'll come too close for comfort."

"Say, that ain't any balloon, Ed,"

muttered Tony, peering. "I can pretty near see through it. It's just a little purple cloud."

"No use taking chances," Jarrett commented, swinging the big ship slightly. "Might tangle up something."

But favored by wind and position, the strange intruder into the heavens continued to bear down on them. Seconds later the Douglas jerked perceptibly.

"Hey! What was that?" demanded the pilot. Then, as the ship began to wobble violently: "She won't answer to the controls right. Something's gone haywire with the rudder."

"I'll say there has!" gasped Tony. "Ed the rudder fin's disappeared, hacked off just like termites. For the love o' Pete, set this crate down quick before she hits the hard way."

The Civil Aeronautics Authority inspectors, next morning's newspapers reported, were baffled completely.

"It isn't as if corrosion had weakened the structure to the point where it finally tore loose under the stress of flight," one expert on aircraft metals and their ailments commented. "This is eaten off the way you'd expect it to be if you'd hung it in a solution of acids until all that was submerged was gone. I can't understand it."

But there were two who did understand it all too well.

"This is all your fault, Henry," exclaimed Professor Paulsen as, over his coffee, he scanned the *Chronicle's* account of the forced landing. "If you hadn't been puttering around with things you don't—and never will—understand, this wouldn't have happened. Now, the way things stand, anything may happen. It's just luck that plane made a safe landing."

"I know," agreed Henry miserably. "Only really, Joseph, I didn't mean to. I just poured everything together to throw out."

His partner patted him on the shoulder.

"I know, Henry, and I shouldn't have spoken so harshly to you. Besides, I'm partly to blame. I took it for granted the stuff would dissipate as soon as it got outdoors, so I turned on the fans." He rose, paced 'round the room, a gaunt gray lion hunting egress from his cage. Suddenly he stopped. "The formula, Henry! Where's that? If we can figure out, even roughly, what was in that hell's broth, we may be able to find a neutralizing agent."

"It's gone."

"Gone? Where?"

"Well"—Henry was abject—"you see, I was taking very complete notes on all my experiments, only — only I left them on the lab bench and that's where they were when the bench disintegrated. They went with it!"

EACH succeeding edition brought darker news: "Chimney of Quiggle Home, Local Landmark, Wrecked." "Vandals Desecrate Parkway Statue; Break Tail from Grant's Horse." "Reservoir Wall Collapses During Night."

Then came the payoff, the jackpot. Headlined, "Workman Watches Clouds as Standpipe Falls; Contractor Claims It's Fog from Panther Breath," the story read:

"Jasper McCarty is no meteorologist, but his study of cloud formations—and one purple cloud in particular—today brought him the interested attention of police and his boss, Otto Rinscheller, contractor. Watchman on a building job in Hilltop Heights, Jasper was present when a nearly-completed standpipe collapsed. Proud of his thorough job of watching, he promptly reported to police headquarters.

"A cloud did it," he declared, 'a little purple cloud. There was quite a breeze and this little cloud swooped down out

of the sky and slapped against the standpipe. Only it went right on through, just like a hot knife cutting butter, and the pipe came down all over the place. Yes, I know it was a cloud; I was so close I could almost touch it."

"Contractor Rinscheller, who plans an investigation of the accident, searched Jasper's lunchbox and found a half-empty bottle of some privately-concocted and strongly alcoholic beverage. 'No wonder McCarty saw purple clouds after drinking that stuff,' he commented. 'I'm surprised there weren't pink elephants riding them.' He preferred drunkenness charges against his (now) ex-employee."

AT police headquarters the captain raised a quizzical eyebrow in open skepticism. "You mean to say," he demanded of the two scientists who faced him "that this cloud you dreamed up on your guinea pig farm over by the county line has been floating around as a unit for three days?"

"If someone was telling me about it, I'd think it was just as preposterous as you do," confessed Professor Paulsen. "My only answer is that it does exist and that it has the destructive qualities I've described. While I've called it a gas, it's actually some queer, cohesive substance of approximately the same density as the atmosphere. Therefore it stays a unit, wafted about by every breeze, no matter how slight. I don't know if it ever settles to earth, but if it does, it makes no difference, because instead of staying put, it simply disintegrates what it touches, then drifts on its way again."

The captain rose.

"Well, gentlemen, thank you very much for coming in to tell me about this," his voice soothed. "I'll be sure to keep an eye open for purple clouds

in case yours hasn't already broken up." He ushered his visitors doorward. Professor Paulsen chewed his own tongue in silent fury. He could visualize the captain's squadroom mimicry of the interview complete with gestures . . .

At first it was only a tiny speck against the blue of the sky as they stood in the doorway. By the time the captain had shaken Henry's hand in farewell for the third time, it was like a small purple handkerchief bearing down on them out of the heavens, scudding before the wind at a brisk gait. Before the officer could complete his exaggerated invitations to be sure to drop around the next time they came in from the farm, it was the size of a lavender silk bedsheet. That was the moment the professor saw it.

"Look out!" he bellowed, lunging for the door. Henry rolled spryly off the steps and into the relative shelter of the archway leading to the ground floor cell block.

The whirling captain's jaw sagged as, eyes wide, he saw the menace. Before he could move a momentary updraft caught the cloud and swished it against—and through—the cornice of the old station-house, leaving a frayed half-moon gap, as if giant jaws had taken a monster bite from the roof's edge.

Momentarily the mysterious mist hung above the building caught in an eddy of air. Then it plunged earthward again on a long glide angle, clipping off three lamp posts and the rear end of a fruit truck before swirling a junkman's horse into nothingness. Now another breeze caught it and it was on its way again, pausing only to eliminate the upper half of the flag pole which towered above the courthouse lawn.

The police captain sat down hard and suddenly on the station steps.

"Well?" demanded Professor Paul-

sen's triumphant voice, while Henry's face appeared, timid and chipmunk-like, peering anxiously over the edge of the steps.

Slowly the captain turned, raised a shaking paw to mop his forehead. His eyes still stared glassily.

"And I thought I'd seen everything!" he whispered tremulously at last.

THE general staff which gathered to map a campaign against the solvent included an airline meteorologist, a chemist from the area's biggest industrial firm, an Air Forces Combat Command colonel, and two physicists from the state university. Professor Paulsen, confirmed by Henry and the police captain, explained the situation to the somewhat skeptical group.

"Now," he concluded, "what do we do about it?"

Colonel Marquart promptly took command, briskly efficient.

"Our first job gentlemen," he declared, "is to locate this alleged cloud"—he cast a suspicious sidelong glance at Henry, the professor, and the captain, as if still not quite sure whether this was a case for a military man or a psychiatrist—"and, once we've found it, keep it under constant observation."

"That's fine," agreed Werthinger, the meteorologist, "but what do we do with the darned thing after we find it? How do we get rid of it? Personally, I'll admit I don't know quite how to go about capturing a cloud."

"I have also thought of that," Colonel Marquart reported somewhat pompously. "I have a squadron of light bombers under my command. Demolishing this purple monstrosity will be excellent practice for them." He rose, bowed stiffly. "And now, gentlemen, if you'll excuse me I shall order my observation planes to make an immediate reconnaissance." Still stiff and pre-

cise he stalked from the room, a big perfectly postured man, exuding dignity and efficiency from every pore.

Two hours later the telephone bell jerked the entire assemblage to attention.

"Colonel Marquart calling," came the clipped voice. "The purple cloud has been located due east of the city, hovering over a patch of uninhabited marshland. I have ordered two staff cars to pick you up so you can watch the thing's destruction."

The drone of the powerful engines of a squadron of Douglas A-20A's, flying in formation, filled the air like the humming of giant bees as the little group of solvent-slaughterers climbed to the top of a hill overlooking the stretch of marshland and, above it, the purple cloud. Colonel Marquart sent them a disciplined beam of confidence and glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Two minutes now, gentlemen. Then—exit your cloud!"

One minute. Thirty seconds. Twenty. The bombers swooped in grim, deadly order. Ten. Five . . .

Bombs plummeted, clearly discernible through binoculars. Some, missing the cloud, thundered their regret as they struck the ground, sending up great billows of white smoke. Others, better aimed hit the purple mass dead center . . . and silently disappeared into it forever. Colonel Marquart gnawed his lower lip, frowned disapproval, and muttered "Amazing!" under his breath. Then he brightened.

"Well, gentlemen, it appears that contact detonators are not the solution. I conceived of something of the sort, so I ordered my men to use delayed-fuse bombs if the others didn't work. Watch them now!"

OVERHEAD the Douglases banked sharply, swept down on their prey

a second time. Another flight of bombs slipped earthward, timed to explode as they reached the cloud's immediate vicinity. The next instant the air was alive with their detonations. The watchers on the hillside could see the cloud rock violently, almost bouncing as the bombs crashed home. But it stubbornly maintained its unity and cohesion.

Now the chemist, a frail-looking young man named Jones, spoke up.

"Why don't we try fire instead of explosives?" he suggested. "That might disrupt the relationship that holds the cloud together, or perhaps even destroy it completely."

An assenting chorus greeted the idea.

"It *does* sound worth a try," grudgingly admitted Colonel Marquart. "All right. I'll send an order back to the field to have the flight come over again, this time with incendiaries." Hastily scribbling an order, he dispatched one of the staff cars with it.

Half an hour later the bombers were back. Again they dropped their deadly loads. Thermite sprayed over and into the cloud like water. The marshland below turned into a flaming inferno, with rabbits and other small game scampering frantically through the willows to escape. The cloud, apparently unaffected by it all, continued to ride easily in the sky, though rising rapidly as the flames below created thermal updrafts. Soon it was almost invisible against the sky's blue background.

Suddenly a breeze caught it, carried it swiftly toward the hillside. Like a kite when the string is cut, it spun and dived, losing altitude as rapidly as it had gained it.

"I don't like the looks of this" said Professor Paulsen, frowning. "That thing has a knack of hitting too close for comfort."

"Nonsense!" exploded Colonel Marquart. "This is a splendid opportunity

to study it." Nervous, but too proud to leave, the rest of the party, too, held their ground as the gay scrap of purple came closer and closer.

"Interesting. Very interesting," commented the colonel keeping his binoculars focused on the caustic cumulus. "I believe I actually can see through it. I'd swear it was gas."

The police captain interrupted:

"I saw that thing closeup once," he muttered, "and I got no hankering to have it fan my brow again. I'm going."

"Er . . . if you don't mind, I'll accompany you," Henry murmured politely, following the captain over the crest of the hill.

BY now, the nebulous thing was less than a hundred yards away and still bearing down on them. The breeze stiffened and it came faster.

"Come on," yelled Professor Paulsen. "I'm afraid it's going to hit. Get out of the way!"

Save for Colonel Marquart, the group plunged after him over the hill to safety. The colonel continued to stare in fascination at the purple vapor.

"Remarkable!" he exclaimed. "Remarkable!" Then, as his predicament—and probable fate—suddenly seemed to dawn on him he turned and sprinted after the others. Before he had gone two steps a root caught his foot. He crashed forward on his face, arms outstretched as if seeking to pull himself onward. And at that moment the cloud struck, gently brushing the spot on the hillside where the colonel had been standing a moment before. A thin, misty tentacle stretched out to lick at his feet. Then the wind changed. As suddenly as it had come, and the cloud swung away again, drifting back across the marsh.

Cautiously, the group which had fled peered over the hill's crest.

"Look!" exclaimed Henry, voice quavering with excitement, goatee aquiver. "It's dug a hole in the hill. Just like a little gravel pit."

"Colonel Marquart!" cried the professor. The army officer still lay where he had fallen. They rushed to him.

"His heels!" gasped Werthinger, the meteorologist. "They're gone!"

They were sheered off as neatly as if a shoemaker had done the job!

"Is he dead, Joseph?" whispered Henry, pale and trembling. The colonel himself answered.

"Oh" he gasped, "oh, don't let it get me. Please don't let it get me!"

Despite the panic that had possessed them all a moment before, the incongruity of the situation sent a gale of laughter through the entire group.

"Praise be!" sighed Werthinger at last. "He only fainted."

NEXT morning's papers were full of the cloud's exploits, all efforts to hush up the story notwithstanding. The bombing technique's failure was reported, as well as the vapor's later doings.

During the night it had drifted through a barn on a nearby farm; cut a swath across another farm's orchard; chopped the top off an oil derrick; and devastated half a dozen cars in a parking lot. Reading about all this by no means raised the anti-solvent command's spirits.

"Sooner or later, if we don't succeed in wiping out that purple paroxysm, it's going to disintegrate more than property and animals," Professor Paulsen reminded the group ominously. "By luck, no human lives have been lost as yet. But it can't go on that way much longer."

A small, dark man of scholarly appearance now arose. "I am Heinrich Van Lear," he introduced himself quiet-

ly. "As you know, I am connected with the physics department of the state university.

"So far as I can see, any efforts of ours to hit upon an agent to neutralize this gaseous substance are doomed in advance to failure. It would be sheer luck if we succeeded.

"But there is one way we can handle it. We can exhaust it. No matter how powerful a corrosive it may be, it eventually will wear itself out. Our job is to see that this wearing-out process is affected with the least possible damage. Therefore I recommend that we transfer it to the nearest spur of the Appalachians, Hardtack Mountain, and batter it, so to speak, against the mountain until it is rendered harmless."

"Transfer it!" snorted Colonel Marquart, who by this time was up and about again, his usual bombast completely restored. "Are you out of your mind, sir? Do you think this hideous abortion of nature's laws can be put in a cage like a tiger and shipped around the country?"

"Not at all, Colonel," smiled Van Lear. "I am first to admit it will be a difficult—a tremendous—task. But it can be done. Your bombers showed us the way. The explosions yesterday rocked and influenced the drift direction of the cloud. By carefully-directed bombing plus favorable winds, we can slowly push it across the 15 miles between here and the mountain, especially since the country in that direction is mostly wild and uninhabited."

His auditors sat in stunned silence for a moment. The task's magnitude appalled them all, yet they could see the logic of Van Lear's thesis.

Finally Colonel Marquart spoke again.

"Hang it all, sir, I've exceeded my authority already. If I were to do what you propose, I'd be court-martialed.

"I quite recognize that," the physicist nodded gravely. "To my mind, however, that bit of purple in the sky constitutes a menace, not only to we of this area, but to the nation. Therefore you must appeal to your superiors and get authority and aid to do whatever is necessary."

THE next morning bombing squadrons from throughout the eastern United States thundered in to assist with the job at hand. By noon the cloud was headed full-tilt for Hardtack Mountain, looking for all the world like a tiny, scared, inoffensive kitten being herded along by a pack of huge belligerent German shepherd dogs.

Reporters, photographers, newsreel cameramen and curiosity-seekers poured into the area to watch the strange sight. The territory was like a gigantic battlefield, with the crash of endlessly-bursting bombs turning the peaceful countryside into a hell of noise and smoke. By nightfall the reluctant patch of mist had been coaxed 10 miles along the road to Hardtack Mountain.

During the night, despite searchlights and constant vigilance, wind slipped the cloud away from them. When morning broke, it was nine miles away again. Van Lear, however, was unperturbed.

"Some bad luck is to be expected," he told Professor Paulsen calmly. "As it is, we have gained six miles over yesterday morning. Since we succeeded in driving the vapor 10 miles, and since now only nine miles remain, we should have it burning itself up against the mountain by nightfall. That is far better than I had expected. I would have considered it a great victory if we had made the trip in a week."

The preceding day's practice had increased the bombardier's efficiency. The cloud was drifting close to Hardtack Mountain's rock crags by 4 p. m. Then,

as three bombers sent a triple-roll of concussion against it, the turbulent air current carried the purple menace into a cluster of boulders. Eager eyes, binocular-supplemented, watched the huge stones evaporate, their exit marked only by a few curling wisps of smoke drifting skyward. Again the cloud slapped the mountainside. As if a magician had waved his wand, tons of rock melted to nothingness.

A stray air current now caught the vapor. It slid down the cliff face, following—and monstrously distorting—a natural chimney in the rock. Deep beneath an overhanging ledge it strayed. The thunder of an avalanche of falling rock echoed down Hardtack Valley.

"That," said Van Lear, "should do the job nicely. A guard must be posted, of course, but I believe we have seen the last of that distressingly active little body of purple mist."

But dawn brought a frantic message from the men on guard:

"Mountain collapsing. Solvent free."

HARDTACK Mountain was a scene of desolation. Great crevices had appeared in its sides. Huge pits yawned. Miniature avalanches slashed its flanks as the supports of masses of rock and earth and vegetation gave way. A pall of dust, almost as great as that created by the bombers the day before, hung over everything. And, high in the sky above, like a sinister omen, hovered the purple cloud.

Van Lear shook his head despairingly.

"I admit defeat," he said quietly. "I cannot comprehend such corrosive powers as that strange bit of nebulosity embodies. That it should be capable of disrupting an entire mountain—" He shrugged helplessly.

Frantic days followed. Scientists from throughout the nation came to

study the cloud and to devise a means of bringing it under control. But while they argued loud and long, all confessed bafflement as to what to do about it.

On the third day after the caustic cumulus' escape from Hardtack Mountain, Professor Paulsen came home to the little guinea pig farm out by the county line. His face was drawn with weariness and strain, his eyes red-rimmed from lack of sleep.

"Henry!" he called, pausing in the yard.

"I'm right here, Joseph. Coming right out," came a muffled voice from the big barn. A moment later Henry, himself, appeared, grimy and sweat-streaked, his goatee awry.

The professor stared at him.

"Well, Henry, what have you been up to now?"

Henry shifted uneasily from one foot to the other and concentrated on polishing his glasses.

"Oh nothing Joseph. Nothing at all."

"Don't lie to me, Henry. There's guilt sticking out your ears, for all that air of innocence. You're up to something out there in the barn." He strode purposefully toward the rambling structure. Henry skittered along beside him, vainly trying to stop him.

"Really, Joseph, I'm not doing anything. Please believe me."

His partner threw open the door. There, sprawled in the middle of the floor, was a rickety steel structure somewhat on the order of an oil derrick. At the base was mounted a weird miscellany of electrical equipment, with wires leading to a complicated arrangement of tubes and filaments at the top of the framework. The whole thing stood about 30 feet high.

"My God, Henry," raved the professor, his voice crackling with anger,

"haven't you caused enough trouble with these mad notions of yours, without adding another to the list?" He sputtered with impotent rage, fists clenching and unclenching as he stared at the strange conglomeration. Henry sidled over cautiously so that the structure he had been working on was between him and his friend. He had never seen the professor this angry before; ordinarily the man prided himself on his self-control.

"Now Joseph—"

"Don't you 'now Joseph' me," raged Professor Paulsen. "Tell me, before I break your neck, you intellectual idiot, just what you think you're doing."

"Really, Joseph, I'm just trying to undo some of the trouble I've caused," explained Henry, meek, apologetic, and careful to keep his distance. "You see it's all my fault about the cloud, so I thought the least I could do was to figure out a way to get rid of it again."

"And I suppose this pile of scrap-iron is the solution?"

"Well, I don't know, of course, Joseph, but maybe . . . You see, I got to thinking about how they use rays these days. Just like ultraviolet rays give you a sunburn, but infrared rays roast you from the inside out."

"Have you gone completely crazy? What are you talking about?"

"I was just coming to that, Joseph. Remember, we tried to burn up the cloud with incendiary bombs, but it didn't do any good? Well, I thought that maybe if we were to shoot it full of infrared rays, instead, we might burn it up from the inside out."

FOR a moment Professor Paulsen stood staring at his little friend in horrified fascination. Then, with surprising speed, he lunged forward, side-stepped the tower, and seized Henry by the nape of the neck.

"Joseph!" squealed Henry. "Joseph! Let go of me!"

"On the contrary," the professor stated icily as he dragged the other toward the yard. "You are coming with me, Henry. I've got to get some sleep and I can assure you I'm not going to have you running around loose while I'm doing it."

Pausing, he slid the barn door shut and rammed home the padlock hasp. Then he dragged the protesting Henry into the house and upstairs, where he locked him in one of the bedrooms.

"Now," he declared through the heavy, old-fashioned oak door in a tone of satisfaction, "I can get a little sleep without worrying about the place burning down over my head before I wake up." With that final sally he stalked away to his own room and a few minutes later was dead to the world in the deep, dreamless sleep of exhaustion.

But Henry was far from asleep.

"Fine way to treat your best friend," he muttered irritably. "Lock me up in a bedroom like a bad boy, will he?" Bright little eyes sparkling with anger behind his steel-rimmed glasses, he scampered over to the window. It was a sheer drop of twenty feet to the ground, without even a rosebush to break the fall. Henry promptly turned to the bed and began knotting sheets together.

WAKE up! Wake up!"

Professor Paulsen forced open his sleep-swollen eyes. "Uh?" he grunted.

Werthinger, the meteorologist, stopped shaking him.

"Look, professor, what's gotten into that little partner of yours?"

Paulsen sat bolt upright.

"What do you mean? What are you talking about? He's locked in the bedroom across the hall."

"And some tied-together sheets are hanging out the window. I met him on the road over near where the purple cloud is. He had a truckload of junk with him and he told me he was going to shoot the thing down with infrared rays."

"What!"

"Yes. And since there was a storm coming up, I thought I'd better let you know about it."

The professor grabbed for his trousers as the crash of thunder filled the room.

"Where was he going?" he demanded.

"Over to that big bald hill just off

the state highway. The last reports said the cloud was almost exactly above it."

An expression of horror swept over the professor's face.

"And he'll set up that crazy tower of his on top of the hill in a thunder-storm," he half-whispered. "It'll be the highest point for miles—a natural target for lightning!" He sprang to his feet. "Come on! We've got to get there before it happens. Just pray we're in time . . ."

Panting and puffing, his own sweat mixing with the rain that splashed against his forehead, Henry carried the last load of equipment to the top of

(Continued on page 140)



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the hill. Covering the electrical machinery with a tarpaulin, he began fitting the tower together. The job took 15 minutes. He peered skyward. The tiny purple cloud was barely discernible against the black background of rainclouds. Thunder rolled ominously in the distance. Lightning flashed dangerously close.

Henry blinked through his rain-spotted glasses. He felt—and looked—singularly like a drowned rat. But now that he had set his teeth in an idea, he wouldn't let go. He plunged into the job of assembling the electrical portion of his equipment.

Now, almost as if attracted to the tower, the purple vapor swirled earthward, tossed about recklessly by the turbulent winds. Below it, Henry toiled on, climbing the rickety tower to place the glass-and-wire maze which fitted into the top. Sliding down again,

he scurried down-hill toward the truck, unreeling a cable as he ran. The truck was to provide power for his weird device. Everything at last connected to his satisfaction, he started the motor, left the machine and panted back uphill to the tower.

"All I have to do now," he told himself happily, "is to sight the ray on the cloud and turn it on." Again he scanned the heavens. A little shiver shook his thin frame as a vivid lightning prong painted the sky electric blue. By its light he saw the deadly little purple cloud sweeping lower and lower . . .

THREE-QUARTERS of a mile away Professor Paulsen and Werthinger stumbled from their car and, vainly endeavoring to shield their eyes from the driving rain, searched the skyline.

Beauty and the Beasties

Charlie Bright was gone! . . . Saki was pushing back Duane Thomas' armchair, pointing to a scrawny, squeaking rat. . . . "See, is Chollie Blight—Saki fix him anceest'li'l dlink!"

Suddenly Saki clapped one round palm to his brow in horror . . . "Saki fo'get—Boss Duane dlink cocktail too!"

Duane felt himself shrinking . . . Soon he was down on all fours, wagging his tail hysterically! What has the servant Saki done to his master in an effort to foil the blackmailing Bright? . . . Can Duane be changed back into a man? . . . What will happen to beautiful Wendy, Duane's fiance, target of Bright's trickery? . . . Thrill to every breath-taking word of this unique story—**BEAUTY AND THE BEASTIES**—by the one and only David Wright O'Brien . . . one of the six great tales in the big

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"There he is!" cried Werthinger, pointing toward the hilltop.

"Come on!" shouted the professor, breaking into a run. Werthinger followed at his heels. Every bush and blade of grass seemed to clutch at their feet. Once the professor tripped, fell flat on his face on the boggy ground. Gasping for breath, their lungs afire, the pair stumbled onward.

On the hilltop, Henry, his hands atremble, fumbled with the various levers of his machine. Despite the rain, his lips seemed dry, the skin of his face taut. Nervously he eyed the caustic cumulus on high, prayed that it would swing into position.

Then without warning, the hum of machinery blacked out. Henry's shoulders twitched. He stared in perplexity at the mass of electrical equipment.

"If the trouble was up here and the power was still coming through, there'd be a short circuit—like we had in the electric fan that time—and that would make smoke come out somewhere," he decided after a moment. "That must mean the truck motor's stopped . . . maybe water in the carburetor again. Darn it!"

Half-way up the hill, Professor Paulsen's legs gave out completely. He sagged to his knees, the world blackening before his eyes. Werthinger caught him beneath the arms, tried to lift him to his feet again.

"No use," husked the other. "I'm too old to make it. Go on, Werthinger. Stop him. Get him away."

On the hilltop, Henry turned and started to trot uncertainly toward the truck. He glanced over his shoulder. The purple cloud hung dead center above the tower. It seemed to be settling onto the framework.

"Oh," sobbed Henry, "it'll disintegrate it before I can get the motor started again!"

THE next instant hell itself broke loose. All the lightning in the heavens seemed to merge into one gigantic bolt. Flaming across the sky, it struck at the tower, burning through the pale lavender of the cloud like thermite through paper. The tower's steel framework twisted fantastically, broke into its components, welded into new forms as the monster charge tore through it to the earth.*

"Henry!" sobbed Professor Paulsen, his voice cracking as he saw the tower crumble and fall.

Five minutes later, his lank frame still shaking with emotion, he knelt beside the body of his little friend. Werthinger turned away; it is not pleasant to see a strong man crack.

"Henry!" whispered the professor. He crossed the little man's scrawny hands over the narrow chest. His eyes were too filled with tears to see clearly.

"Joseph," said an extremely weak and quavering voice. The professor jerked as if a sledge hammer had smashed against his chest.

"Joseph," the voice repeated, "where am I?"

"Don't worry about it any more, Henry," Professor Paulsen said sagging in utter relief. "The cloud's gone, dispersed by electrolysis, and you're alive, and that's enough. Just plan to take things easy now."

"Yes, Joseph," the other replied obediently, a far-away look in his eyes. Then: "Joseph."

"Yes, Henry?"

"Joseph, this electrolysis idea sounds interesting. Don't you think it would make me a nice hobby?"

* Quite by accident, Henry disintegrated the cloud. The lightning, striking through it to his tower, set up a process of electrolysis, decomposing the cloud into its elements. The same basic principle demonstrated when an electric current is passed through a solution of a salt, such as sodium chloride. The water is broken down into its basic hydrogen and oxygen.—Ed.

READER'S PAGE

"McCAULEY OF THE SLICKS"

Sirs:

The October F. A. surprised me: It was a good issue—at long last! Here's why I liked it:

1. Cover. Another beauty like this and McCauley's reputation will be so great that he'll no longer be called the "Petty of the Pulps." No, Petty will be called the "McCauley of the Slicks"!
2. Inside pix. Far above the usual F. A. standard. Mac gets the gum-drops; Jackson rates the lemon.
3. No "Ocar" or "Carson of Venus" tripe this time.

4. Every yarn was at least readable. "The Truthful Liar" was best. 'Ray for Cabot! "Tink Takes A Hand" was second. "The Perfect Hide-out" was well-done, although the plot was not new and the ending was obvious.

Not so good were Millard's and Wilcox's "Enchantress" yarns. These, like Coblenz's recent "Lemuria" tale F. A. could do without.

D. W. Boggs,
2215 Benjamin Street, N. E.,
Minneapolis, Minn.



"Think nothing of it, Miss McCord . . .
I'm just testing my degravitator"

Well, I guess Petty is the McCauley of the Slicks, because when you see Mac's next girl, your prediction will have come true.

We were amazed at the reception given to "The Truthful Liar." Cabot always amazes us. Maybe he's got something mysterious in his shorts (we mean his stories) that makes readers blubber in their beer. He's coming back soon with more.—Ed.

HE'S A RABBIT

Sirs:

I have just finished your FANTASTIC ADVENTURES of September, 1941. The story of "The Liquid Man" was swell. That picture on the cover is all right, except there is too much clothing, and not on the liquid man either. The rest of the stories were fair except "Miracle At Dunkirk"; it stunk. Why not put Burroughs into this book? Please, more pictures with little clothing.

The Rabbit,
Rabbit Warren,
Rabbitville, Anystate.

What that Mac girl isn't doing to our citizens! Well, she'll be back soon—with clothes, and we bet you'll like her even more.—Ed.

FIVE STARS FOR MILLARD

Sirs:

The October cover was the best so far, thanks to McCauley for it. "The Earthquake Girl" was an excellent novel by Millard. It deserves five stars and a sequel.

What I'd like to know is when Ray Cummings is coming back with a sequel to the Druid Girl, and also Eando Binder's Little People?

The "Mystery of the Martian Pendulum" was the best novelet of Martian conquest this year.

Fred Heinichen,
No address.

Ray Cummings has a story in the December issue of AMAZING STORIES, which will be on sale October 10. Perhaps in the future he will work out something on the Druid Girls, but right now he is not planning it. Binder is working on a Little People yarn for us at the moment.

The Pendulum story was well received in AMAZING STORIES, and we are glad to note you read both books.—Ed.

FLORIDA CALLING

Sirs:

Whataya think, the October issue wuz good,

that's what I said. Everything about it was perfect, except one thing—it had an illustration by Magarian. And the cover—Oooohhhh! PERFECT! Although I prefer a cover by Paul, I am content with McCauley.

PLEASE—give us Paul for inside illustrations, can Magarian, improve Jackson (for he IS good), bump Fuqua off (gangster style), and dump Ruth (he stinks).

The stories as a whole were par excellent 100%. I rated "The Truthful Liar" and "The Earthquake Girl" as the two best stories, and then add that "Tink Takes a Hand" wasn't bad at all, in fact it was good.

I thank you for introducing us to Jay Jackson, his life was VERY interesting. Please give us the life of Paul McCauley, and while you're at it, leave out Fuqua.

Your best authors are Cabot, McGivern, Gilford, Burroughs, Wilcox, Burroughs and Burroughs.

Warren Fields,
18 Central Ave.,
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Avon Park, Fla.

We're going to make you eat your words concerning Fuqua. We've just had a look at a new cover by him, and wait'll you see it!—Ed.

HE KNOWS HIS ADJECTIVES

Sirs:

Marvelous, stupendous, nothing like it before, best story I ever read; that is my opinion of John York Cabot's "Miracle at Dunkirk." Although I thought "The Liquid Man" was one of the most fantastic novels I ever read I still will give "Miracle at Dunkirk" all my votes every time.

No, for gosh sakes, you can't do a thing like that, why it's humanly impossible to do this to us readers, why the Reader's Page is one of the best articles in FA. No whatever you do, don't take out the Reader's Page.

Speaking of covers, the less clothes the better, or do you catch what I mean?

Chesley Erickson,
Amarillo, Texas.

Now we'll have to turn down the next eight Cabot manuscripts—so he won't get a swelled head! But glad you like the yarn. We thought it was pretty good when we first read it . . . Heck no, we won't cut out the Reader's Page! Speaking of covers—yes, isn't she the most gorgeous thing you ever saw?—Ed.

NO EXPLAINING NECESSARY

Sirs:

You didn't need to do one particle of explaining for the switch of stories in September FA. Gilford's "The Liquid Man" was absolutely perfect, and easily ranks as one of the year's best fantasy tales. I haven't read anything like it in a long time. It reminded me ever so slightly of H. G. Wells' "Invisible Man." But there's really no connection.

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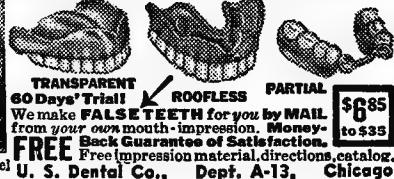
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Parts of this story almost seemed as good as Wells himself. And that is something! It was a masterpiece. More like it, please.

Favorites of mine are Krupa and Magarian (terrific). I rank the yarns as follows:

1. The Liquid Man—way out in front.
2. Miracle at Dunkirk—Cabot seems to be coming up with every issue. Getting good, he is.
3. The Pulsating Planet—very different.
4. Wilbury's Incredible Gadget—The Man Who Saw Through Time—Bern is always delightful, Raphael was good, except for the hackneyed plot.
5. Oscar Saves the Union—Each Oscar yarn seems to get worse. I think it's about time Norman thinks up something else.

I almost quit reading FANTASTIC. I had skipped two issues, simply ignored it, till one day I saw Fuqua's "Liquid Man" cover. I tried to keep on ignoring it; I walked stiffly past it at the newsstand. A few days later I saw it again, and it was all I could do to pass it up. Finally I could stand it no longer, drove into town, laid down my 20c and now I love FANTASTIC all the more.

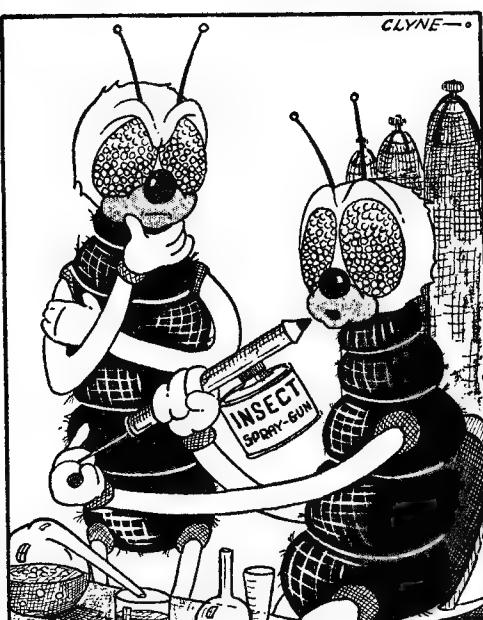
Mac Chamberlin,
Oberlin Beach,
Huron, Ohio.

Which seems to be a pretty powerful argument both for our "lurid" covers and Fuqua!—Ed.

WHERE ARE THESE AUTHORS?

Sirs:

Edgar Rice Burroughs is by far your best acquisition, but of course ERB is not a regular contributor. Don Wilcox is fine, the best of FA's and Amazing's staff. Up among the top stands Nelson S. Bond, but not for several months now



"Someone from Earth sent this to me . . . I wonder what it's for?"

has he written a story for you. Edmond Hamilton and Manly Wade Wellman are also some of your better writers who haven't been around for some time. What's happened to them? And what's happened to that ace illustrator, Julian S. Krupa? More by him, please. Magarian is delightful but Virgil Finlay please. Is that line about getting Bok just banana oil? The covers on the whole are really excellent, with H. W. McCauley holding practically all the honors. St. John also does marvelous covers, his work for *Amazing* being superior to the ones in FA.

1. Queen of the Living Puppets—Wilcox.
2. Tink Takes a Hand—McGivern.
3. The Perfect Hideout—Costello.
4. The Earthquake Girl—Millard.
5. The Truthful Liar—Cabot.
6. The Goddess of Love—Farnsworth.
7. Thunder Over Washington—McGivern.

The issue on the whole was really swell, and the cover, OH BOY!

Vincent Scullin,
Hotel Traymore,
Atlantic City, N. J.

A strange thing has happened to Wellman and Hamilton and Binder and others. They are busy turning out comic strip continuity. And that explains the falling off in their production.

Finlay and Bok are both coming soon. We have sent both several stories to illustrate.

As for Krupa, he's the world's busiest!—Ed.

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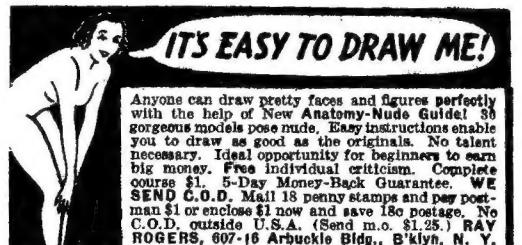
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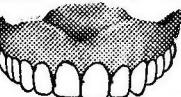


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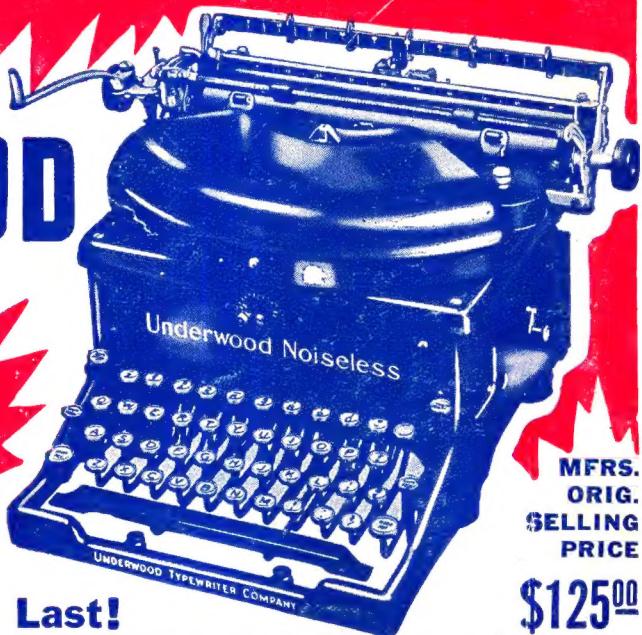
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